

THE FULFILLMENT OF TIME: A LANGERIAN/WHITEHEADIAN  
AESTHETIC OF MUSIC PERFORMANCE

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by  
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for Jack -

URSPRUNG und BEISTAND

Ohne Musik wäre das Leben ein Irrtum

-Friederick Nietzsche

## Introduction

## MUSIC: MEANING AND FUNCTION

## THE SEARCH FOR THE PROPER QUESTION

The matter of music's meaning has long been of concern to students of the art, and the resulting debate has ranged far and wide -often little to the credit of scholarship's name. Music libraries abound with theories reflecting nearly every conceivable standpoint, from Deryck Cooke's radical referentialism<sup>1</sup> to the absolutist position of Clive Bell or Eduard Hanslick. The character and conclusions of this conflict have often been summarized, perhaps best in John Hospers' Meaning and Truth in the Arts, the fourth chapter.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that both schools present strong arguments, and it is even more evident that music is in fact experienced -often by the same individual- as having both external and intrinsic significance.

Susanne Langer has observed that the "incorporation of thought in more and more variegated 'isms'," and "the clamor of their respective adherents to be heard and judged side by side" are often distress symbols denoting the end of an epoch -the end of a question's useful-

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<sup>1</sup>In which, for instance, it is suggested that "to fall from the tonic to the dominant [8-7-6-5 (minor)], taking in the 'mournful' minor seventh and 'anguished' minor sixth, is clearly to express an incoming painful emotion, an acceptance of, or yielding to grief; passive suffering; and the despair connected with death." Deryck Cooke, The Language of Music (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 162-163.

<sup>2</sup>John Hospers, Meaning and Truth in the Arts (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946).

ness- while calling for new approaches to old problems.<sup>3</sup> Such may well be the case with our problem of the "meaning of music," given the list of "variegated isms" already with us in musical aesthetics; e.g. purism, absolutism, referentialism, reductionism, and limited -or modified- referentialism. The time may well be at hand for aesthetics to ask other questions.

It is instructive to note that when today's practicing musicians sit down to verbalize about their art, the question of meaning, if mentioned at all, is raised with reluctance, and then only in response to the work of critics, aestheticians, and philosophers. As the performer or composer looks at his field, the question becomes either that of music's function or that of its essence. He asks, "What does music do?" or "What is the nature of music?"

Roger Sessions, a contemporary composer and performer held in high esteem, speaks hardly at all of music's meaning. When asked to address himself to the nature of the music experience, he devotes his time rather to the functional aspect of music in the experience of composer, performer, and listener.<sup>4</sup> The written reflections of Bruno Walter, one of this century's most radiant orchestral conductors, open with a chapter entitled "Of Music." Walter's concern in this, his only theoretical chapter, is to set down his "Thoughts on the origin of music" and "on the essential nature of music." At no point does he

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<sup>3</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1951), p. 23.

<sup>4</sup>Roger Sessions, The Musical Experience of Composer, Performer, Listener (New York: Atheneum, 1962).



discuss the meaning of music.<sup>5</sup>

Sir Francis Tovey, in his essay entitled "The Meaning of Music" (1936), cannot bring himself to really deal with the question, contenting himself with comments on the nineteenth century's abortive attempts to apply programmatic titles to musical compositions. At one point he asserts that "every reasonable lover of music will follow [Felix] Mendelssohn's paradox that words carry miserably vague information as to the meaning of music."<sup>6</sup> Aaron Copland, the notable contemporary American composer, frankly suggests that;

the precise meaning of music is a question that should never have been asked, and in any event will never elicit a precise answer. It is the literary mind that is disturbed by this impression.<sup>7</sup>

We may conclude that the problem of the meaning of music is not of primary concern to the musician. This is the case not because the question is a difficult one, but rather because he does not see it as vital to an understanding of what he is about. The concerns he does seem to have are the matters of essence and function. Such inquiries offer greater promise of "precise answers," and in their thoughtful execution often emerge helpful solutions to the difficulties which have given rise to questions of meaning. A close look at Bruno Walter's reflections, and, later, an extensive dissertation of Susanne Langer's

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<sup>5</sup>Bruno Walter, Of Music and Music-Making (London: Faber and Faber, 1961).

<sup>6</sup>Sir Donald Francis Tovey, The Main Stream of Music and Other Essays (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), p. 398. Mendelssohn's comment was in reply to a request to discuss the meaning of Songs Without Words.

<sup>7</sup>Aaron Copland, Music and Imagination (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1952), pp. 22-23.

theory of music, will serve respectively as testimony to and explanation of this position.

#### THE ORIGIN AND ESSENCE OF MUSIC (BRUNO WALTER)

Through his sensitive, lyric prose, Bruno Walter expresses some of the truths encountered throughout a life of music-making, and his words are full of important insight. In these paragraphs, he displays an intuitive grasp of the understanding of music's nature which forms the central conception of our entire study.

Man [writes Walter], being a creature of Nature and subject to the cosmic influences that inform all earthly beings, must needs have been under the sway of . . . music from his earliest days; his organism reverberated with its vibrations and received its rhythmic impulses. These spheric events, instilled with universal significance, and their influence on the development of man, must have determined man's musical propensities, which -from an appropriate point of sensory and spiritual maturity onward- were to blossom forth in musical utterances of living sound.

. . . All that I wish to point out in this context is the intrinsicity of music to the universe. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Our art of music, pervaded as its temporal manifestations are by its essential, timeless character, does not only exert a decisive influence on our culture but is also a message from higher regions which exhorts us to be aware of our own higher origin.<sup>9</sup>

Or, again:

If, for the moment, we disregard what is expressed by music, and turn our attention to its essential character, to the sublime order of its sounding, moving universe in which a creative spirit unmistakably reveals itself, we shall be inclined to consider music a parable of creation itself, ruled by the logos. I am of the belief that there is no more immediate access to an understanding of the logos granted to man than by way of music, which bears resounding witness to the latter's divinely creative and ruling character.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Walter, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 15, my emphasis.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

These are bold claims, yet it is my intention to offer, in the following pages, an extensive corroboration of these statements, based upon selected experiential and speculative inquiries. This study proceeds to deal with the performance of music itself, but its discussion of the art reflects an initial agreement with these observations. If our thoughts are found to be consistent with those of a consummate artist such as Bruno Walter, we can find no better company.

One further comment from Walter's pen speaks to the question of religion and music. This theme will find relevance in the concluding portions of this paper, and it will be well to hold his thoughts in mind:

The combination of music and religion has always seemed pertinent to both the religious and the aesthetic mind. The universal significance of such works as Bach's St. Matthew Passion and B minor Mass, Mozart's Requiem, Beethoven's Missa Solemnis, Handel's Messiah, Bruckner's Te Deum, etc., springs not only from admiration for their supreme artistic standards, but also from a general conviction that the essence of music is commensurate with religion.<sup>11</sup>

Walter has referred to music's special relationship with time, insofar as it transcends common notions of that dimension ("its essential, timeless character,") while suggesting a special path to an understanding of the universal logos provided by music. "The image of time" is Susanne Langer's phrase, descriptive of the nature of music as she sees it, while Roger Sessions calls music "the art par excellence of time."<sup>12</sup> In the two parts immediately following, notions of time, duration, and their relation to the nature of things will be introduced. It will be shown how fresh understandings of time may help clarify the nature of music.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 17, my emphasis.

<sup>12</sup>Sessions, op. cit., p. 66.

PART I

THE PHILOSOPHY OF CHANGE AND  
MUSICAL SYMBOLIZATION

## Chapter 1

### BASES FOR DISCUSSION IN BERGSON AND LANGER

The problem of art is . . . to infuse into disconnected symbols mental duration. . . . The "time" of a work is not . . . either the pure time of psychical experience nor the pure space of pure perception, but a new spatio-temporal. It exists in its own right within its own space-time. And in this respect it transcends the moment of inspiration, the actual time of the conceiver.<sup>1</sup>

With this characterization by Ian Alexander of the implications of Henri Bergson's thought for the arts, we begin the discussion of the theory of music explored and utilized in this paper. Bergson himself did not deal and would not have dealt with the "problem of art" as it is here presented to us. His understanding of perception was profound, recognizing the agency of perceptual forms. For him, meaning derives from the intuition of the creative force behind any perceived object, whether it be a material or a created one. But he stops, as Susanne K. Langer indicates, on the point of saying that real relationships may be specifically embodied in certain symbols. After discussing Bergson's unique view of real duration as consisting of the most interesting and generally least-noticed aspects of time, Langer writes;

This . . . throws out a new challenge to the philosopher's powers of logical construction: find us a symbolism whereby we can conceive and express our firsthand knowledge of time!<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ian W. Alexander, Bergson: Philosopher of Reflection (London, Bowes and Bowes, 1957), pp. 92-93.

<sup>2</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 114.

That such a symbolism is in fact available has been suggested above. It is one task of this paper to show how music is, in Roger Sessions' words, "an art, even the art par excellence, of time."

### CONCEPTIONS OF TIME

On occasion, Langer best serves her purpose by pointing the reader to other materials. In Feeling and Form she refers to three articles which, when taken together, form the basis for her theory of music as the "image of time." These sources are "Music and Duration" by Basil de Selincourt (Music and Letters I, 1920), "Bergsonism et Musique" by Gabriel Marcel (La Revue Musicale, 1924), and "Le Temps et la Musique" by Charles Koechlin (La Revue Musicale, 1926). The first and last of these were republished -the Koechlin in English translation -in a collection edited by Mrs. Langer in 1958.<sup>3</sup>

The notion of time, says Koechlin, pervades our imagery and our thought. The afterlife, progress, the past, the future -all these and many more become key concepts in religious dogma, in our desires and our dreams -in our entire life.<sup>4</sup> But time is manifest in more than one character. There are four, in fact, which are, according to Koechlin, commonly experienced and commonly confused:

1. Pure Duration, attribute of our deepest consciousness, and seemingly independent of the external world: life unfolding.
2. Psychological Time. This is the impression of time that we receive according to the events of life: minutes that seem like centuries, hours that seem too fast; the pace of years so rapid in

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<sup>3</sup>Susanne K. Langer (ed.) Reflections On Art (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1958).

<sup>4</sup>See Charles Koechlin, "Le Temps et la Musique," La Revue Musicale, VII:3 (1926), 46.

old age, so slow when one is young. In short, duration relative to life's circumstances.

3. Time measured by mathematical means -those that appeal to visual procedures -(hour glasses, time-pieces, chronometers). This time, indeed, complies to the precarious conditions of measure, their apparent accuracy masking however a profound uncertainty. . .

4. And finally, I would speak of musical time. . . . Auditory time is without doubt that which approaches most closely to pure duration.<sup>5</sup>

Mathematical time is familiar enough. It is the basis of order in society, the assurance of a common standard in the world of science.

The clock -metaphysically a very problematical instrument- makes a special abstraction from temporal experience, namely time as pure sequence, symbolized by a class of ideal events indifferent in themselves, but ranged in an indefinite "dense" series by the sole relation of succession. Conceived under this scheme, time is a one-dimensional continuum.<sup>6</sup>

Felt, or "psychological" time is much closer to the nature of time as we experience it -but not as we rationally understand it. "We have a great deal of temporal experience," says Langer, "that is, intuitive knowledge of time -that is not recognized as 'true' because it is not formalized and presented in any symbolic mode."<sup>7</sup>

The phenomena that fill time are tensions -physical, emotional, or intellectual. Time exists for us because we undergo tensions and their resolutions. . . . If we could experience only single, successive organic strains, perhaps subjective time would be one-dimensional like the time ticked off by clocks. But life is a dense fabric of concurrent tensions, and as each of them is a measure of time, the measurements themselves do not coincide.<sup>8</sup>

The lines of Shakespeare in As You Like It perhaps best describe the nature of felt time -that which escapes the "grasp of

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 47. The translation here follows that of Mrs. Langer as far as possible. The remainder is my own. See Langer, Reflections On Art.

<sup>6</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 111.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. <sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 112-113.

scientific knowledge." In the third act, Orlando speaks with Rosalind;

Ros: I pray you, what is't o'clock?

Orl: You should ask me what time o'day: there's no clock in the forest.

Ros: Then there is no true lover in the forest; else sighing every minute and groaning every hour would detect the lazy foot of Time as well as a clock.

Orl: And why not the swift foot of Time? Had not that been as proper?

Ros: By no means, sir: Time travels in divers paces with divers persons. I'll tell you who Time ambles withal, who Time trots withal, who Time gallops withal and he who stands still withal.

Orl: I prithee, who doth he trot withal?

Ros: Marry, he trots hard with a young maid between the contract of her marriage and the day it is solemnized: if the interim be but a se'nnight, Time's pace is so hard that it seems the length of seven year.

Orl: Who ambles Time withal?

Ros: With a priest that lacks Latin, and a rich man that hath not the gout; for the one sleeps easily because he cannot study, and the other lives merrily because he feels no pain; the one lacking the burden of lean and wasteful learning, the other knowing no burden of heavy tedious penury: the Time ambles withal.

Orl: Who doth he gallop withal?

Ros: With a thief to the gallows; for though he go as softly as foot can fall, he thinks himself too soon there.

Orl: Who stays it withal?

Ros: With lawyers in the vacation; for they sleep between term and term and then they perceive not how Time moves.

To say that time "ambles" and "gallops" is to affirm, with Koechlin, the nature of lived time. It is to say that the essential nature of time is not uniformity of process, but simply process itself within the intervals of duration. Uniformity is simply an abstract concept imposed upon an experience of the real. It is our task to move beyond abstractions to that experience itself -that experience to which we all, with Rosalind, may witness to some degree.

Felt time is the concern with the interval itself rather than with its limits. Both duration and auditory time, too, have to do with the interval itself; duration is the interval, whereas auditory (or musical) time reveals its form. The section following explores this



matter of the interval and its limits as Bergson saw it, but we may not claim his support for these statements regarding musical time. Marcel readily concedes this point, yet he goes on to say; "melodic continuity gives us an example -an illustration of pure continuity."<sup>9</sup> Because Bergson could not accept any sort of symbolism that might intervene between the real duration and the intuition of it, he would assign nothing more than a metaphoric role to music's flow. Both Langer and Marcel, in their separate attempts to build conceptions of music deriving from Bergson's view of the nature of things, are careful to note that in so doing they are moving considerably beyond the proper limits of speculative thought as Bergson saw them.<sup>10</sup> The philosopher's famous passage in Matière et Mémoire describing musical time as "the successive tones of a melody whereby we let ourselves be cradled" is to be understood as Bergson himself understood such descriptive passages -merely as images which might be helpful to the mind as it attempts an effort of the intuition.

#### LA DURÉE RÉELLE

What is the nature of the "pure duration" which Bergson, Langer, and others affirm as embodying a basic structure of existence? Further, is it true to say, as does Bergson, "La durée, c'est l'absolu"?<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Gabriel Marcel, "Bergsonisme et Musique," La Revue Musicale, VI:5 (1924), 222.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Ibid., 221-222; and Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 116.

<sup>11</sup>Henri Bergson, Matière et Mémoire (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1896), p. 218.

As Langer has suggested, Bergson's all-important insight is, "that every conceptual form which is supposed to portray time oversimplifies it to the point of leaving out the most interesting aspects of it, namely the characteristic appearances of passage."<sup>12</sup> Bergson points out that the common conception of time has more to do with the measurement of duration than with the experience of it. Time may be dissected and analyzed, and this, its "scientific" use, is familiar to us all. It provides a basis of social order through the establishment of an abstract, mutually-agreeable measure. Whether that measure be represented by the earth's movement, the procession of clock hands, or geometric relationships with and among the stars, it is based on the assumption that time is not a category of reality, but rather an abstraction.

But it remains that time is nearly always felt as reality; -as having an existence independent of, yet a causal effect on, human existence. This feeling, for Bergson, is not a delusion. Rather, the mistake comes at the point of imputing reality to measured time rather than to real time -pure duration- of which scientific time is merely a measurement.

Pure duration is no such technical device. It is the one absolute which characterizes the perceived world. It lies at the heart of human existence and consciousness, and conceivably at the center of the universe as well. It may be variously described as "passage," "becoming," "change," "process;" but all of these terms denote a single, basic principle, the reality of which is apparent to all conscious

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<sup>12</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 114.

beings. That "all things flow" is, for Bergson, the ultimate metaphysical statement.

For the very acceptance of time's standards depends on our "feeling" that one minute is equal in duration with the next; one hour is "as long" as the next, and so on. The reality of "felt time," though inexact, justifies scientific time, and it is in the failure to discriminate between the two that the belief in the external reality of measured time is grounded.

Perhaps this misplaced ontological faith is best illumined if we recognize how inconsistent it is with actual experience. There are aspects of time which, while common enough in our experience, are difficult for us to affirm intellectually. The subjective justification for measured time is that its units of measurement are felt by us to be equal in duration. Yet even when those units are actually felt as unequal, by habit we continue to impute this equality of measurement to time. "The so-called 'uniformity of time's movement'," declares one Bergsonian thinker, "is an unmeaning fiction; an hour of joy is infinitely shorter than an hour of expectation."<sup>13</sup> "Time moves so quickly," we say, "when you're having a good time." A good time is felt as a fast time. When pressed by an outside observer, we are likely to bow to our training and affirm that that hour of "good" time was equal in duration with another hour of boredom, -yet from the standpoint of our experience, the statement is in fact not true. The problem, says Bergson, is that "common sense, which is occupied with detached objects, and also science, which considers isolated systems, are con-

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Solomon, Bergson (New York: Dodge, 1911), p. 23.

cerned only with the ends of the intervals and not with the intervals themselves."<sup>14</sup>

La Mobilité is the essence of movement; passage is that of time. Pure duration is the principle which embraces both mobility and passage, and which is, for Bergson, the essence of reality itself. A single duration is extensive in ways independent of measureable units. It is better described as corresponding with experience.

If I want to prepare a glass of sugar and water [writes Bergson] I must, like it or not, wait until the sugar melts. This little fact is big with meaning. For here the time I have to wait is not that of mathematical time which would apply equally well to the entire history of the material world, even if that history were spread out instantaneously in space. It coincides with my impatience, that is to say, with a certain portion of my own duration, which I cannot protract or contract at will. It is no longer something thought, it is something lived. It is no longer a relation, it is an absolute.<sup>15</sup>

The duration here described, then, is not the sum of intervals, but rather a single interval, corresponding with my impatience, or, for Rosalind's thief, being commensurate with his dread. These intervals are real in the fullest sense, and it was to the nature of those intervals that ancient science devoted itself. Modern science, Bergson says, on the other hand seeks laws, establishes relations between magnitudes, and even recognizes time to be the magnitude to which all others are to be related.<sup>16</sup> But, he adds, it places more value on the clear definition of time's units than on those units themselves, or

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<sup>14</sup>Henri Bergson, L'évolution créatrice (Paris: Felix Alcan, Editeur, 1912), p. 361. In this and all quotations from this book, the translation by Arthur Mitchell (New York: Holt, 1911) has been used as a basis, but numerous changes have been effected; some small, some not so small.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 363.

than on the flux displayed within and between those intervals.

Succession exists; I am conscious of it; it is a fact. When a physical process is going on before my eyes, my perception and inclination have nothing to do with accelerating or retarding it. What is important to the physicist is the number of units of duration the process fills; he does not concern himself with the units themselves -that is why the successive states of the world could be spread out all at once in space without his having to change anything in his science or to cease talking about time. But for us, conscious beings, it is the units that matter, for we do not count extremities of intervals -we feel and live the intervals themselves.

Now, we are conscious of these intervals as definite intervals. Returning to the sugar in the glass of water . . . , why must I wait for it to melt? While the duration of the phenomenon is relative for the physicist, . . . this duration is an absolute for my consciousness, for it coincides with a certain degree of impatience which is rigorously determined.<sup>17</sup>

Science, then, is less reliable than is one's own consciousness in the understanding of time. The correlation of duration and personality is definite and the two are mutually supportive. Bergson will not go so far as to declare "process" to be an ontological characteristic of the universe. Given his doctrine of intuition such speculation is not possible anyway. But he will affirm, again in L'évolution créatrice;

This duration may not be the matter of fact itself, but that of the life which reascends its course; the two movements are no less dependent upon each other. The duration of the universe must therefore be one with the latitude of creation which may find a place in it.<sup>18</sup>

Certainly, it is Bergson's belief that the principles of becoming and duration characterize the nature of the universe, but only because that is what seems to be suggested by the forms of consciousness. As the insights concerning the rhythms of conscious durations, understood through intuition, are tested in the long run against the

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 366-367.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 367.

hard realities of experience, the viability of such metaphysical speculation will become increasingly, but never completely, justified. Certain of Bergson's insights should be kept in mind as the whole of the "philosophy of change" is brought into the new perspective of Whitehead's work.

Duration [Bergson writes] is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances.<sup>19</sup>

Evolution [which is the very essence of life] implies a real persistence of the past in the present, a duration which is, as it were, a hyphen, a connecting link. In other words, to know a living being or natural system is to get at the very interval of duration. . . .

Continuity of change, preservation of past in the present, real duration -the living being seems, then, to share their attributes with consciousness.<sup>20</sup>

The degree to which a man feels pure duration is the degree to which his world-view is consistent with both his past and experienced reality.

Finally, in the broader context of the world and the ways of understanding it;

As soon as we are confronted with true duration, we see that it means creation, and if that which is unmade endures, it can only be through its being bound to that which is becoming. Thus will appear the necessity of a continual growth of the universe -I should say of the life of the real. And thus will be seen in a new light the life which we find on the surface of our planet, a life directed in the same sense as that of the universe -the inverse of materiality. To the intellect, that is to say, there will be added intuition.<sup>21</sup>

#### SUSANNE LANGER'S THEORY OF SIGNS

##### The New Key

Many of the words which Mrs. Langer uses in her theory of art,

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 371.

-e.g., "image," "virtual," "semblance" -denote concepts which Henri Bergson specifically rejected in his la vrai métaphysique, yet she claims to find support for her view in the Frenchman's unique approach to philosophy. The Bergsonian view rejects any claim by discursive, analytic approaches to the discovery of truth. "Analysis," he writes, ". . . is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known," and which "multiplies without end the number of its points of view in order to complete its always incomplete representation, and ceaselessly varies its symbols that it may perfect the always imperfect translation."<sup>22</sup> The use of symbols in the effort to perceive reality leads inevitably to falsification, he claims, and metaphysics, -the pursuit of absolute knowledge-, "is the science which claims to dispense with symbols."<sup>23</sup>

The dead-ends encountered so often by philosophy result from its dependence on symbols, he asserts, and centuries of futile speculation ought to suggest trying other means to the perception of reality -if such perception is indeed possible, and if one may say that there is in fact a reality which enjoys an existence independent of human projection. There is indeed such a reality, according to Bergson, and that reality is change. "Not things made, but things in the making, not self-maintaining states, but only changing states, exist."<sup>24</sup> "All reality . . . is tendency."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, this reality is "given immediately to the mind"<sup>26</sup> through the act of intuition. "By intuition

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<sup>22</sup>Henri Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), p. 24.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.    <sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 49.    <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 50.    <sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

is meant the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible."<sup>27</sup> The absolute may be apprehended only through an effort of intuition and never through the manipulation of symbols, although it can "be suggested to us indirectly by images."<sup>28</sup>

In Feeling and Form, Mrs. Langer suggests that had M. Bergson possessed a little more "logical daring," he might have found that the limited expressive capabilities of discursive symbols in respect to change need not imply that all modes of symbolization are unsuitable. Langer has accordingly broadened the understanding of symbolization, incorporating intuition in a manner consistent with both common sense and with Bergson.

Mrs. Langer has attempted to direct philosophy's attention away from the fruitless effort to determine the nature of things, calling instead for an investigation of the "new key," -symbolization- and of its role as the underlying mental process characterizing the human species. While most of philosophy has fallen prey to the encrustations of a dying age, says Langer, mathematicians have continued on the better path of investigating reality in the abstract. They have never operated under the delusion that they were dealing with anything other than concepts.

The secret lies in the fact that a mathematician does not profess to say anything about the existence, reality, or efficacy of things at all. His concern is the possibility of symbolizing things, and of symbolizing the relations into which they might enter with each other. His "entities" are not "data," but concepts. . . . Mathematical constructions are only symbols; they have meaning in terms of relationships, not of substance; something

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-24.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 30.



in reality answers to them, but they are not supposed to be items in that reality.

Here, suddenly, it becomes apparent that the age of science has begotten a new philosophical issue, inestimably more profound than its original empiricism: for in all its quietness, along purely rational lines, mathematics has developed just as brilliantly and vitally as any experimental technique, and, step by step, has kept abreast of discovery and observation; and all at once, the edifice of human knowledge stands before us, not as a vast collection of sense reports, but as a structure of facts that are symbols and laws that are their meanings. A new philosophical theme has been set forth to a coming age: an epistemological theme, the comprehension of science. The power of symbolism is its cue, as the finality of sense-data was the cue of a former epoch.<sup>29</sup>

Thanks to mathematics, philosophy has discovered the importance of studying the elements of communication for their own sake. And Langer is convinced that the study of symbolism is the clue to the ontological questions which philosophers ask. For one of man's basic needs is that of symbolization -the creation of expressive tools that may be used to represent his thoughts and feelings as he communicates with his fellows. And to Langer, these "signs" are the building blocks out of which man has constructed his language, his ritual behavior, and his art.

#### Sign Function in Langer's Theory: Signal and Symbol

The term "sign" is generally understood to denote anything that stands for, or represents, something else, whether that "something else" be an object, event, or idea.<sup>30</sup> For our purposes, there is in Langer's

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<sup>29</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1951), pp. 28, 29.

<sup>30</sup>The terminology used here and hereafter conforms to Mrs. Langer's own revision as given in the Preface to the 1951 edition of Philosophy in a New Key, pp. v-vi. Accordingly, "signal" is substituted for the original "sign." The latter is now free to serve generically.

treatment a distinction within the general field of sign function that should prove useful; it is that between the signal and symbol function of signs.

The signal has an immediate referrent and demands an appropriate response. It is the only sort of sign available to non-human animals. If a dog hears the announcement of his master's name (say, John), he may rush about looking for his master, or if trained to do so, he may fetch John's slippers, but the dog can never use that verbal symbol as an element of discourse or reflection. He can never say, "What about John?" A parakeet may well have the capacity to imitate the sounds of language, but it is unable to deal with the conception it conveys as conception. With a trained dog, a command to "beg" will result in her "begging," be we may not expect her to ponder that act, its relationship to her self-respect, and so on, because this is a symbol function -which is, as far as we know, confined to the human species.

A signal indicates the existence -past, present, or future, -of a thing, event, or condition. . . .

. . . . .

The logical relation between a signal and its object is a very simple one: They are associated, somehow, to form a pair; that is to say, they stand in a one-to-one correlation. To each sign there corresponds one definite item which is its object, the thing (or event, or condition) signified. All the rest of that important function, signification, involves the third term, the subject, which uses the pair of items; and the relation of the subject to the other two terms is much more interesting than their own bare logical coupling. The subject is related, essentially, to the other two terms as a pair. . . .

The [difference between a signal and its object] is, that the subject for which they constitute a pair must find one more interesting than the other, and the latter more easily available than the former. . . . If it were not for the subject, or interpretant, signal and object would be interchangeable.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, pp. 58, 59.

Contrasting this with the symbol function of signs, Langer writes in Feeling and Form;

Herein symbols differ radically from signals; A signal is comprehended if it serves to make us notice the object or situation it bespeaks. A symbol is understood when we conceive the idea it presents.<sup>32</sup>

Or, in Philosophy in a New Key;

The fundamental difference between signals and symbols is the difference of association, and consequently of their use by the third party to the meaning function, the subject; signals announce their objects to him, whereas symbols lead him to conceive their objects.<sup>33</sup>

An additional element, then, is included -the "idea," or "conception." While the signal process involves a subject/signal/object sequence, the symbol function adds the conceptual element, so that the sequence becomes; subject/symbol/conception/object. It is the conception that the symbol means, rather than the object.<sup>34</sup> The verbal symbol "c-a-t" refers as it stands to no individual organism. It is, rather, a conception that is meant by this symbol -a conception that requires qualification, that is, context, if it is to denote a particular animal. It does not stand for the object, as does the signal. "A term which is used symbolically and not signally does not evoke action appropriate to the presence of the object."<sup>35</sup>

-So that, in our example of John's trained dog, what is missing is an ability to manipulate signs that mean conceptions -a capacity that his master does possess. John is able to utilize signs that mean conceptions of the dog. These signs -symbols- serve him in the dog's

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<sup>32</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 26.

<sup>33</sup>Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, p. 61.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

stead as he buys food, or a collar that fits the dog's neck though that neck be some distance removed from the pet shop.

Symbols are not proxy for their objects, but are vehicles for the conception of objects. To conceive a thing or situation is not the same thing as to "react toward it" overtly, or to be aware of its presence. In talking about things we have a conception of them, not the things themselves; and it is the conceptions, not the things, that symbols directly mean. Behavior toward conceptions is what words normally evoke; this is the typical process of thinking.  
 . . . . .

Note that I have called the terms of our thinking conceptions, not concepts. Concepts are abstract forms embodied in conceptions; their bare presentation may be approximated by so-called "abstract thought," but in ordinary mental life they no more figure as naked factors than skeletons are seen walking on the street. Concepts, like decent living skeletons, are always embodied -sometimes rather too much.<sup>36</sup>

#### CRITIQUE OF BERGSON: PRESENTATIONAL SYMBOLISM

In Langer's system, there are two modes of symbol function; discursive, and non-discursive (presentational). The former is the use of signs that have assigned syntax (whether natural or arbitrary), and its expression is normally more linear than that of presentational signification.

The discursive symbol possesses its own form, and its syntactical meaning is manipulated with that of others to "make sense." The presentational symbol, on the other hand, assumes the form of that which it expresses. Neither its form nor its meaning can exist apart from the other. Its form is its meaning. This is the mode of signification that characterizes all of art, and it is by means of presentational symbols that fresh conceptions enter the thought-patterns of our discursively-oriented culture.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 61, 61n.

In a dramatic appeal for recognition of this mode as an important factor in human intellectual life, Mrs. Langer writes;

To us whose intelligence is bound up with language, whose achievements are physical comforts, machines, medicines, great cities, and the means of their destruction, theory of knowledge means theory of communication, generalization, proof, in short; critique of science. But the limits of language are not the last limits of experience, and things inaccessible to language may have their own forms of conception; that is to say, their own symbolic devices. Such non-discursive forms, charged with logical possibilities of meaning, underlie the significance of music; and their recognition broadens our epistemology to the point of including not only the semantics of science, but a serious philosophy of art.<sup>37</sup>

This "broadening of epistemology" is exactly the point at which Langer's view moves beyond that of Bergson. Whereas Bergson rightly despaired of the limits of language, claims Mrs. Langer, he need not have concluded that symbolization itself is so limited. She suggests that external realities such as la mobilité and the elan vital<sup>38</sup> have in fact their own logical structures, and that symbols -presentational ones- indeed can express their import. Static symbols may express the dynamic reality of "change." They may, in fact, embody the logical form of change. For the presentational symbol assumes the form of that which it expresses. There is here no duality between the symbol and its "meaning."

As we observed in the opening pages of this paper, the concept of "meaning" is often confusing to aesthetics. Here we can see that this results from the effort to impute a duality to the presentational symbol. That symbol does not "mean" anything; rather, it presents an

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 224, emphasis mine.

<sup>38</sup> Bergson's "vital impulse," which is the primal energy at the heart of the universe.

entire Gestalt for perception, its content being entirely embodied in that symbol. The symbol is an articulate form. That which is articulated is the set of logical relationships -the internal structure- of the conveyed import. That content does not exist apart from its articulation.

The basic concept is the articulate but non-discursive form having import without conventional reference, and therefore presenting itself not as a symbol in the ordinary sense, but as a "significant form" in which the factor of significance is not logically discriminated, but is felt as a quality rather than recognized as a function.<sup>39</sup>

Langer's description of the presentational symbol's function sounds much like Bergson's effort to portray the perception of reality. The difference is that whereas Bergson affirms the unmediated intuition of that reality, Langer has shown that a certain type of symbolization presents forms which are available for apprehension through a process akin to, but not identical with, intuition, rather than through "logical discrimination."

If Langer is correct, then it is possible to speak of symbolic activity in respect to realities that are immediately given to perception: yet one may affirm, with Bergson, that that perception occurs ultimately by virtue of intuition. This is what she means by saying that the significance of the presentational symbol is "felt as a quality" rather than logically discriminated. For ultimately, even logical formulations depend for their significance on the intuitive recognition of their basic assumptions.

The simple concatenation of propositions known as "syllogism" is only a device to lead a person from one intuition to another.

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<sup>39</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 32.

Anyone who, convinced that all men are mortal and even granting Socrates is a man, still does not recognize that therefore Socrates is mortal, is devoid of logical understanding because he does not respond with normal intuition at each stage of the discourse. . . . All discourse aims at gradually building up, cumulatively, more and more complex logical intuitions.<sup>40</sup>

So much more, then, is intuition the key to understanding the function of non-discursive symbols. Significance, or import, is grasped at once, as a totality; but now we are dealing not with the compilation of successive simple intuitions, but with the entire import of the symbol. That import is not built up as is the meaning of a discourse; it is an immediate understanding of formal significance grasped in toto, or it is no understanding at all.

The comprehension of form itself, through its exemplification in formed perceptions or "intuitions," is spontaneous and natural abstraction; but the recognition of a metaphorical value of some intuitions, which springs from the perception of their forms, is spontaneous and natural interpretation. Both abstraction and interpretation are intuitive, and may deal with non-discursive forms. They lie at the basis of all human mentality, and are the roots from which both language and art take rise.<sup>41</sup>

Langer endorses the concept of pure duration, differing with Bergson on the question of how duration may be perceived. Moreover, she is willing to treat discursively, as a means of understanding, the facets of experience which are ultimately expressible only through presentational symbolism.

One of Langer's major contributions is the demonstration that such discursive ~~treatment~~ need not damage those symbols' import for us. Analysis employs the power of discursive symbols, through the use of which the functions and relationships within the presentational symbol

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 379.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 378.

may be isolated, manipulated, and thus understood -through the cumulation of logical intuitions. As long as the modes of symbolizing are clearly and continually distinguished, understanding arising from functional analysis can serve to enrich perceptual experiences of artistic and other non-discursive symbolism.

This division of symbolic labor establishes aesthetics as an important philosophic enterprise, and, in regard to the present study, permits a highly discursive examination of Bergson's basic insight -without necessarily "reducing the object to elements already known."



## Chapter 2

### MUSIC AND TIME: LANGER'S THEORY

This is Mrs. Langer's definition of music; "The creation of virtual time, and its complete determination by the movement of audible forms."<sup>1</sup> In exploring this statement, the following key phrases will be helpful;

The elements of music are moving forms of sound; but in their motion nothing is removed. The realm in which tonal entities move is a realm of pure duration. . . . Musical duration is an image of what might be termed "lived" or "experienced" time. . . .

The semblance of this vital, experiential time is the primary illusion of music. All music creates an order of virtual time, in which its sonorous forms move in relation to each other -always and only to each other, for nothing else exists there.<sup>2</sup>

Music makes time audible, and its form and continuity sensible.<sup>3</sup>

### AUDITORY TIME AND MUSIC

The direct experience of passage, as it occurs in each individual life is, of course, something actual, just as actual as the progress of the clock or the speedometer; and like all actuality it is only in part perceived, and its fragmentary data are supplemented by practical knowledge and ideas from other realms of thought altogether. Yet it is the model for the virtual time created in music. There we have its image, completely articulated and pure; every kind of tension transformed into musical tension, every qualitative content into musical quality, every extraneous factor replaced by musical elements. The primary illusion of music is the sonorous image of passage, abstracted from actuality to become free and plastic and entirely perceptible.<sup>4</sup>

In the course of her discussion of musical time in Feeling and

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<sup>1</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 125.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

Form, Mrs. Langer relies heavily on Basil de Selincourt's article, "Music and Duration"<sup>5</sup> -and rightly so. There has not yet appeared, to my knowledge, a statement of music's temporal nature that is more articulate and as rich with a love of the art as is this short essay:

Music is one of the forms of duration; it suspends ordinary time, and offers itself as an ideal substitute and equivalent. Nothing is metaphorical or more forced in music than a suggestion that time is passing while we listen to it, that the development of the themes follows the action in time of some person or persons embodied in them, or that we ourselves change as we listen. . . . The space of which the painter makes use is a translated space, within which all objects are at rest, and though flies may walk about on his canvas, their steps do not measure the distance from one tone to another. . . . The Time of music is similarly an ideal time, and if we are less directly aware of it, the reason is that our life and consciousness are more closely conditioned by time than by space. . . . The ideal and the real spatial relations declare their different natures by the simplicity of the contrast which we perceive between them. Music, on the other hand, demands the absorption of the whole of our time-consciousness; our own continuity must be lost in that of the sound to which we listen. . . . Our very life is measured by rhythm: by our breathing, by our heartbeats. These are all irrelevant, their meaning is in abeyance, so long as time is music.

. . . If we are "out of time" in listening to music, our state is best explained by the simple consideration that it is as difficult to be in two times at once as in two places. Music uses time as an element of expression; duration is its essence. The beginning and end of a musical composition are only one if the music has possessed itself of the interval between them and wholly filled it.<sup>6</sup>

Elsewhere he writes, ". . . The being and element of true music is surely just its course, its onward flow."<sup>7</sup>

Langer's theory of music is largely an expansion on the basic

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<sup>5</sup>Basil de Selincourt, "Music and Duration," Music and Letters, I:4 (1920), 286-293, reprinted in Susanne K. Langer (ed.), Reflections On Art (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1958).

<sup>6</sup>Selincourt, "Music and Duration," pp. 286-287, quoted in Langer, Feeling and Form, pp. 110-111.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 292.

insights laid out in this article. She articulates its finer points and draws them into the broader range of philosophic thought and a comprehensive theory of art. However, in the process she sometimes employs her terms in confusing ways. One point of ambiguity must be approached here; her description of music's temporal prototype first in terms appropriate to pure duration, and elsewhere in language closer to psychological time.

Early in Feeling and Form, she writes that the import of music is "the pattern of sentience -the pattern of life itself, as it is felt and directly known."<sup>8</sup> Throughout most of her text, she consistently uses the terms "felt time" and "experienced passage" to denote this pattern of musical time. The "model for the virtual time created in music," she asserts, is "the direct experience of passage, as it occurs in each individual life."<sup>9</sup> A few pages earlier she stated, "The realm in which tonal entities move is a realm of pure duration."<sup>10</sup> To align "pure duration" and "felt time" so closely can lead only to confusion.

A more promising standpoint may be assumed through the use of Mrs. Langer's own categories of "primary" and "secondary" illusion. Illusion, which is treated in detail in the following section, may for the present be understood as "that which constitutes the work of art . . . ; it is what results from the arrangement [of given materials in an aesthetically pleasing pattern], and it is literally what the artist makes, not something he finds. It comes with his work and passes away in its destruction."<sup>11</sup> "Primary" does not mean first-

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

established, she says, "but always established where any elements are given at all."<sup>12</sup> Secondary illusions are aspects of the created work that are more-or-less often, but not always, present. The position of this paper in this regard is that it is Langer's "felt" time, or experienced passage (Koechlin's "psychological time") which constitutes the prototype for music's primary illusion. Thus we will suggest that, while the primary illusion of music may still be identified with Langer's term "virtual time," what is meant by "time" must be only "the pattern of life as it is felt and directly known."<sup>13</sup>

The distinction between pure and felt duration is one of standpoint. Pure duration is the nature of passage itself, while felt time is passage as it is experienced from the human point of view.<sup>14</sup> Neither is less "true" than the other. However the former might be regarded, by virtue of its objective character, as more directly related to Walter's "intrinsic essence of the world."

In either case, a new temporal standpoint is established. Music does indeed "suspend ordinary time, . . ." demanding that "our

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 84

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>14</sup>This distinction between "felt" and "pure" time can be explained through a brief anticipation of Whitehead's metaphysic. As each basic pulse of immediacy -the becoming occasion- takes account of the data in its past, every element in that past (actual entities said to be objectively immortal) possesses two distinct statuses in its relationship with the present occasion.

It is both initial and objective datum. As objective datum it stands in its own right, independent of all apprehensions of it, whether real or only possible. As it is objectified by a present becoming occasion and thus becomes a factor in that occasion's selfhood, its status is that of initial datum from the standpoint of the present. No objective change has occurred; the difference is simply that of standpoint.

own continuity must be lost in that of the sound to which we listen."<sup>15</sup>  
 The time of the musical symbol includes not only the simple principle of continuity, but spatial aspects of tension and volume as well.  
Whenever music sounds, this virtual image of time and space is established.

We have said that music reveals the form of the interval -the duration. The essence of that form is passage in its salient form; la mobilité -la continuité- is that aspect of time which is given directly to our experience. As in Bergson's discussion of motion, in which he argues that it is motion itself which we perceive, and not several points of rest on, say, the arc of an arrow's flight;<sup>16</sup> so with time, it is not its measureable segments but its very unfolding that we perceive. This is the essence -the concrete quality- of time.

This "life unfolding" is the pattern for auditory time. It lies close to the heart of our conception of the real. It is, as Koechlin notes, an "attribute of our deepest consciousness." Insofar as it contributes to our understanding of ourselves as beings in time, it is pivotal in our awareness of what it means to be human.

#### SEMBLANCE AND VITAL IMPORT

We must ask not only, what does music do?, but also, how does it do it? How, in fact, are felt and pure duration made manifest to human perception other than through pure acts of intuition? How do the

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<sup>15</sup>Selincourt, pp. 286, 287.

<sup>16</sup>See Henri Bergson, L'évolution créatrice (Paris: Felix Alcan, Editeur, 1912), p. 336 f..

roles of signification and symbolization detailed above participate in the event? What does Langer mean by the terms "virtual" and "artistic illusion"?

Much of the significance of Langer's thought derives from her insistence on the view that the true import of art is illusory in nature. By this she suggests that the aesthetic quality of an art work consists neither in the relationship of the creator's intent to the result, nor in the physical character of that result, but in the perceptible "appearance" affected by the physical character of the art object.

What is "created" in a work of art? . . . It is an image, created for the first time out of things that are not imagined, but quite realistic - canvas or paper, and paints or carbon or ink. . . .

An image in this sense, something that exists only for perception, abstracted from the physical and causal order, is the artist's creation. . . . Something arises from the process of arranging colors on a surface, something that is created, not just gathered and set in a new order: that is the image.<sup>17</sup>

Since these words "appearance" and "image" are visually-oriented, Mrs. Langer prefers the term "semblance" to describe that which is created in a work of art. This word suggests not only visual but also auditory, tactile, and kinaesthetic perception. With music, for example, it is in the semblance of felt duration that the significance lies: "The primary illusion of music is the sonorous image of passage, abstracted from actuality to become free and plastic and entirely perceptible."<sup>18</sup>

Mrs. Langer credits Carl Jung for the concept of "semblance;" Schiller having brought it into aesthetic discourse, as Schein. Both

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<sup>17</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 47.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 113, my emphasis.

men recognized the vast importance to man's psychological and imaginative life of the appearance of reality. All entities have aspects of substance and appearance, both of which may convey meaning. Langer, in turn, describes how art, through the conscious agency of the artist, abstracts the aspects of semblance from the practical ones. Thus;

[Art] liberates perception -and with it- the power of conception- from all practical purposes, and lets the mind dwell on the sheer appearance of things. The function of artistic illusion is not "make-believe," as many philosophers and psychologists assume, but the very opposite -disengagement from belief.<sup>19</sup>

Because of art's abstractive nature -because it has freed perception from practical considerations and from the necessity of belief, the concepts embodied in the art symbol are presented directly to the understanding for their own sake. The capacities of conception and understanding have no obligation other than to the presented semblance. Whatever meaning that symbol possesses is there insofar as it is embodied in its appearance. "Its [perceptible] character is its entire being."<sup>20</sup>

This, then, is the basis of the use of such terms as "virtual space" to describe the primary illusion of painting, and of "virtual time" to denote that of music. Sonia Gregor describes Langer's use of "virtual" in this way; "'Virtual' is, for Susanne Langer, although not 'real' not simply to be opposed to 'real' or 'factual.' This is 'poetic truth.'"<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> Sonia Gregor, "Presentational Theories Need Unpacking," British Journal of Aesthetics, XIX: 2 (April 1969), 168.

## Chapter 3

### THE MUSIC SYMBOL

It may now be said that the music symbol's entire significance is embodied in its tonal, audible being; that its vital import is somehow a function of the symbol's abstract form; and that that import is "charged with reality" which is significant to the human spirit. The reason for this marked degree of significance, claims Langer, is that the import of music is the "pattern of sentience -the pattern of life itself, as it is felt and directly known."<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, this pattern of life itself" is understood as "experienced passage," and it is this that music is all about. It is no simple happenstance that the word "passage" commonly denotes a musical phrase. A passage of music is a section of audible time.

The locus of the musical symbol has long been a problem in aesthetics. Just what is the music? Is it a vaporous entity which is somehow captured by the composer and written down for performance? Is it rather the marks on the manuscript which may be read by the trained musician as readily as a discursive text? Or must it be performed to be music? (If so, what is the "it" which is being performed?) After all, regardless of facts of performance, there does exist something which is identifiable in various times and places as the "St. Anne"

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<sup>1</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 31.



Fugue. The playing of this work may vary widely from one organist to another, yet the "music" is readily identifiable as having an independent integrity.

Once again, Mrs. Langer's work illuminates the problem and gives us a new standpoint. Her discussion of the composition process is particularly helpful here.

#### THE COMMANDING FORM

The first stage of composition, Langer writes, is a "more or less sudden recognition of the total form to be achieved."<sup>2</sup>

The matrix [or commanding form], in music the fundamental movement of melody or harmonic progression, which establishes the greatest rhythm of the piece and dictates its scope, is born of the composer's thought and feeling, but as soon as he recognizes it as an individual symbol and sets forth its outline it becomes the expression of an impersonal Idea. . . . The great moment of creation is the recognition of the matrix, for in this lie all the motives for the specific work; not all the themes -a theme may be imported if it fits the place- but the tendencies of the piece, the need for dissonance and consonance, novelty and reiteration, length of phrase and timing of cadences. . . . One may puzzle for a long time over the exact form of an expression, not seeing what is wrong with this or that, and then, when the right form presents itself, feel it going into place almost with a click. Since the emotional content of it is not clearly conceivable without any expression, the adequacy of the new element cannot be measured by it with anything like the precision and certainty of that intuitive "click." It is the commanding form of the work that generates such a judgment.<sup>3</sup>

Charges of Platonism have been brought against Mrs. Langer from time to time. However, the "commanding form" which she describes is simply an idea of tendencies and necessities which the composer wishes to articulate, rather than an already-existing entity which he merely transcribes. Were he both musician and poet, he might find that some

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 122-123.

matrices lend themselves more readily to poetic expression, while others are best expressed musically. Many an unsatisfactory musical composition may well have emerged from a matrix that was actually more amenable to a poetic rendition.

The commanding form may or may not find adequate expression in any single composition. As Langer has said, it is impossible to measure a composition with its own conception, for that conception cannot be communicated by the creator by any means other than the art symbol itself. The composer may try to speak of his work in discursive ways, she says, but its emotional content is ultimately unknowable apart from the perceptible, expressive form.

It is quite appropriate to call the result of the musical creator's activity a "composition" or "work." Whatever lies on the manuscript page or audio tape has been assembled -composed- in the effort to reflect the form of the commanding idea in a way that another person may be able to grasp that shape. Whether or not the conception is transparent to that idea depends on the skill of the composer. When his techniques hide his idea, it may be that no one will ever understand. It is possible, however, that enough of the controlling idea is evidenced to transcend the tangible expression. For example, there is general consensus of critical opinion that Anton Bruckner's original version of his Fourth Symphony far better serves his original conception than does his later formulation, in which extensive revisions were effected on the advice of the composer's disciple, Ferdinand Lowe.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See Howard D. McKinney and W.R. Anderson, Music In History (2d ed.; New York: American Book, 1957), p. 563n.

There is no way for that judgment to have been reached except through a balancing of the commanding form with its physical expression. And that form could be known only through that physical expression. Thus the commanding idea was made known adequately in the bulk of the revised symphony's structure to the extent that the original formulation could be recognized to be an even better rendition of that idea.

Brewster Ghiselin describes the extensive process, full of re-writes and rejected lines, through which his poem "Birth of Aphrodite" was written. His witness emerges from long, sometimes agonizing, experience.

I did not understand all those things and grasp their significance before I wrote the final lines. The writing was an aspect of the act of understanding. . . .

There were formal problems requiring continual manipulation of materials, at the same time offering difficulties and providing a challenge and stimulant. The poem was moving from the first toward an embodiment of an idea and impression of that integral unity of man with the restless universe. . . .<sup>6</sup>

It is clear from what he writes that Ghiselin's poetic composition was a matter of finding the right phrases to express an "idea or impression" which was not clear in his own mind until the poem was completed. As with all presentational symbolism, the emotional content was not perceptible -did not, in fact, exist beyond a vague urge in the poet's mind- apart from its tangible expression.

Ludwig van Beethoven had a difficult time shaping his materials to the great ideas in his mind. His constant re-writing was not a changing of those ideas, but an effort to find just the right theme or progression to express them. When it happened, he knew it, and when it

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<sup>6</sup>Brewster Ghiselin (ed.), The Creative Process (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1952), p. 133, my emphasis.

did not happen, he suffered. The many versions of his symphonies, and his agonies over the Fidelio Overtures witness to this fact of his composing life.

Mozart, on the other hand, was more gifted in his technical facility. His conceptions were clear, as were his expressions of them. The incredible speed with which he composed, and the vast file of his works were the results of those innate capabilities. The greatness of his music lies in its transparency to the commanding form. Like all great ideas, those forms are unfathomable, and the timeless quality of Mozart's work is due to its ability to draw us into different aspects of that idea with every hearing.

#### LIFE UNFOLDING

In understanding the nature of the music symbol, it is important to realize what is the role not only of the commanding form, but also of the symbol's auditory nature. Our tendency to speak of a "book of music" or of "writing music" blurs what should be a sharp distinction between audible and inaudible art forms. A book, once written is a book, regardless of whether it is ever read. But a musical composition, in manuscript, in print, or yet to be set down by the composer, is not music. The commanding form may well have found spatial organization on paper, but music does not emerge until that paper becomes the guide for a performer as he transforms that spatial form into an audible one. Music, above all, must be heard to exist, for its vital import is a function of its existence in time. Langer calls music (and all other non-plastic arts) "occurrent" art, which means

that it requires a definite time of perception.<sup>7</sup> It is out of sound that music's illusion is made, and without occurrent expression the composer's work remains an outline of rich possibilities, -a composition only, not yet music.

The shape of melody, for instance, is only evident while it is being played, sung, or heard internally in time. Its spatial framework may be shown on staff paper, but this is a mere skeleton suggesting the form of the structure to be fleshed out in tones. Tones, however, are successive, and the presentation of the melody must take time. It begins at a certain temporal standpoint, and ends at another. At no one point of its course may the melody be said to be presented in its entirety. Even at its conclusion, when that shape has been finally presented, all but the remaining vibrations of the final note are lost -they remain only in memory. To stop at any one point of the melody is to destroy it. This sad fact of music's "perpetual perishing" is eloquently expressed in Jean-Paul Sartre's La Nausée;

For the moment, it is the jazz that plays; not even a melody, simply the notes -a myriad of small tears. They know no rest; an inflexible order first gives them birth, then destroys them, never allowing them to truly exist. They run, they hurry, they strike me in passing with a dry blow and then disappear. I would like to hold them, but I know that, if I were to succeed, nothing more would remain between my fingers. . . . I must accept their death; I must even wish it.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 121.

<sup>8</sup>Pour l'instant, c'est le jazz qui joue; il n'y a pas de mélodie, juste des notes, une myriade de petite secousses. Elle ne connaît pas de repos, un ordre inflexible les fait naître et les détruit, sans leur laisser jamais le loisir de se reprendre, d'exister pour soi. Elles courent, elles se pressent, elles me frappent au passage d'un coup sec et s'anéantissent. J'aimerais bien les retenir, mais je sais que, si j'arriverais à en arrêter une, il ne resterait plus entre mes doigts. . . . Il faut que j'accepte leur mort; cette mort, je

The essence of the melody is its tonal passage in time. The individual notes serve only as elements which render the underlying passage tangible. Notes do not comprise a melody; the melody places the notes at certain temporal standpoints in order to make itself perceptible. "The essence of all composition," writes Langer, ". . . is the semblance of organic movement, the illusion of an indivisible whole."<sup>9</sup> It is this indivisible whole that Sartre's character knew he would destroy if he did not allow the notes to die and the melody to continue. It is the organic shape of the composition that gives it life and distinctiveness; but that shape does not exist unless it is being lived out -performed- in time.

It is in this necessity of organic movement, then, that music articulates a cardinal fact of temporal order. Just as "time" is an intellectual abstraction expressing, among other things, the ultimate category of creative advance, so "music" is the tonal expression of that same principle. It is the perceptible pattern of sentience itself.

Music's sounding suspends clock time, establishing a new order. It transcends the segmented, calculated aspects of time in order to express the flow itself. As it lies in the mind or on the page it does little beyond suggesting tendencies and possibilities. But once in performance it expresses by its flow, tension, and release the very flow of time, with its vagaries of speed and tone, which Bergson points to as the very essence of things.

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dois même la vouloir. Jean-Paul Sartre, La Nausée (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), p. 36.

<sup>9</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 126.

This "experienced passage" is known to everyone, yet it is impossible to describe discursively. When it finds musical expression, one cannot match up elements of sound with elements of time, saying that "this cadence means this; . . ." or "this key signature means such-and-such." These elements are simply tools for the articulation of the commanding form, and their adequacy may only be grasped in the moment of perceiving the art symbol and its illusions. The commanding form presents its judgment upon the articulation itself. The listener either perceives, or he does not. "The congruence of the symbolic form and the form of some vital experience," says Langer, "must be directly perceived by the force of Gestalt alone."<sup>10</sup> That Gestalt, in music, is the commanding form, and the vital experience is awareness of living in the dimension of time.

#### DIE SCHÖNE MÜLLERIN: NUMBER 6

The burden of the preceding paragraphs is that the import of music is unknowable outside of performance itself. Nevertheless, some discursive treatment of specific works is possible, and some indication can be given of the ways in which musical materials function to create something new. Our discussion will center on a song by Franz Schubert; "Der Neugierige" (Op. 25, No. 6), the sixth piece in a twenty-part song cycle entitled Die Schöne Müllerin (The Lovely Miller Maid). This example may help clarify the ways in which music establishes its own time.

There is no record of the process through which Franz Schubert composed his first song cycle, Die Schöne Müllerin, in 1817. We do

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

know that he customarily composed furiously, usually in the morning, and his manuscripts show a minimum of reworking. This varied greatly within his work, and, since we possess only the final, finished copy of most of his songs, it is difficult to judge whether any particular song, of which we have just the "printer's" version, underwent extensive rewriting. It is safe to speculate that, in the realm of song (but not, unfortunately, in all other fields of musical composition), Schubert's technical capacities matched his conceptions, and the commanding idea often found full and transparent expression at the first writing.

Following is the text for "Der Neugierige" with which Schubert began, excepting one word, "alle," which was inserted, as indicated, in the third line. Written by Wilhelm Müller (1794-1827), it stands as the sixth of twenty-three poems comprising a lyric tragedy entitled Im Winter zu Lesen. Schubert set only twenty of them, maintaining Müller's order with those he did use. Figure 1 presents the printed version of the song as it appears in the Dover edition of Schubert's works<sup>11</sup> (See pages 38-40).

Der Neugierige

Ich frage keine Blume,  
Ich frage keinen Stern,  
Sie können mir [ ] nicht sagen, [alle]  
Was ich erfähr so gern.

Ich bin ja auch kein Gärtner,  
Die Sterne stehn zu hoch;  
Mein Bächlein will ich fragen  
Ob mich mein Herz belog.

The Curious One

I do not ask a flower,  
I do not ask a star;  
They could not tell me  
what I want so much to know.

I am, anyway, no gardener;  
The stars are too high.  
I will ask the brooklet  
if my heart deceived me.

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<sup>11</sup> Franz Schubert: Complete Works (New York: Dover, 1965), XVI 149(1)-153(3). This printed version is in the public domain, and is a reprint from Franz Schuberts Werke. Kritisch durchgesehene Gesamtausgabe (Beitkopf & Härtel, 1884-1897), VII (1895), 149-151.



Figure 1

# VI. Der Neugierige.

1 Langsam. 2 3 4 5

Singstimme. Ich fra - ge kei - ne

Pianoforte. *p* *pp*

6 7 8 9

Blu - me, ich fra - ge kei - nen Stern; sie kön - nen mir al - le nicht

10 11 12 13

sa - gen, was ich er - führ' so gern. Ich bin ja auch kein

14 15 16 17

Gärt - ner, die Ster - ne stehn zu hoch; mein Bäch - lein will ich

18 19 20 21 22

fra - gen, ob mich mein Herz be - log. 0

F. S. 780

2 (150)

**Sehr langsam.**

23 Bäch - lein mei - ner Lie - be, wie bist du leu - se  
 24  
 25  
 26 stumm! Will ja nur Ei - nes wis - sen, ein Wört - chen um und  
 27  
 28  
 29  
 30 um, ein Wörtchen um und um. Ja, heisst das eine  
 31  
 32  
 33  
 34 Wörtchen, das an - dre heisset Nein, die bei - den Wört - chen schlie - ssen die  
 35  
 36  
 37 gan - ze Welt mir ein, die bei - den Wört - chen schlie - ssen die  
 38  
 39

*pp*  
*cresc.*  
*p*  
*cresc.*

F. S. 795.

40 41 42

gan - ze Welt mir ein. O

43 44 45

Bäch - lein mei - ner Lie - be, was bist du wun - der -

46 47 48

lich! Will's ja nicht wei - ter sa - - gen, sag'

49 50 51

Bäch - lein, liebt sie mich? sag' Bäch - lein, liebt sie

52 53 54 55

mich?

F. S. 793.

O Bächlein meiner Liebe,  
Wie bist du heut' so stumm!  
Will ja nur eines wissen,  
Ein Wörtchen um und um.

O dear brooklet,  
How quiet you are today!  
I want to know only one thing,  
One little word, over and  
over.

Ja, heisst das eine Wörtchen,  
Das and're heisset Nein;  
Die beiden Wörtchen schliessen  
Die ganze Welt mir ein.

Yes is that little word-  
The other one is No.  
In these two words are bound  
up the whole world for me.

O Bächlein meiner Liebe,  
Was bist du wunderlich!  
Will's ja nicht weiter sagen,  
Sag', Bächlein, liebt sie mich?

O dear brooklet,  
How strangely you behave!  
I'll not repeat what you say-  
Tell me, brooklet,  
Does she love me?

"Der Neugierige" follows a robust song entitled "Am Feierabend."

In the latter song, the cycle's protagonist, a young miller, wishes passionately for "a thousand arms" and other superhuman qualities with which to impress his loved one -a lovely, light-headed miller maid- with his devotion. On occasion, she has spoken to him of love, and at times she treats him as if he were someone special. Yet at other times she seems hardly to notice him. He is confused.

Following as it does this expression of bewilderment, "Der Neugierige" presents an articulation of the uncertainty which tortures the young miller. The first section, played by the solo piano, contains a strong movement away from and back to the tonic B major. The harmony stretches to the VII<sup>7</sup> of V within the space of one and a half measures, maintaining a feeling of motion across the quarter rest (at measure 2 b), before returning to the tonic through chords of the dominant at m. 4. This harmonic instability, coupled with the numerous rests, underlines the poetic emphasis on doubt and uncertainty.

At the words, Blume, Stern, Gärtner, hoch, fragen, and sagen, the first note of the two-note phrases lands on a non-harmonic tone or

chord, resolving on the second note. On all but sagen, the phrase ending is raised, suggesting the miller's questioning mood.

The miller turns to his source of constancy and advice -the brook; ("I will ask my brook if my heart deceived me.") The piano responds with a variation of the miller's resolve (m. 20-21), ending on the dominant. The measure which follows -silent nearly throughout- is full of motion from the  $V^7$  to its resolution to I at m. 23. In performance, this measure is rarely counted strictly. Instead, it is a soaring suspension of clock time that is highly expressive of the expectancy, fear, and hope which the text suggests. The temporal shape of this feeling-mixture is one of soaring toward an inevitable landing in reality. For the moment, one refuses to repeat the past, looking instead solely toward the future. This measure of silence is one of the most eloquent elements in the song.

The brook's arpeggio figure underlines the miller's approach. The initial chord of the second section (m. 23) is a solid tonic one, as is the final chord of the piece. A feeling of constancy and inevitability is evoked through regular, recurrent chords on the downbeat, coupled with the arpeggio figure also associated with the brook. The constancy of motion and the permanence of essential shape thus evoked aptly characterizes the brook's role in this little drama, and they dominate the remainder of the song.

"One word" is all he requests; "yes" is one possibility, the other, "no." "My whole world depends on these two words," he cries. At measure 33, sustained chords suspend the activity of the brook and support a recitative. At m. 35, the structure is shaken by a chromatic shift to the key of G (the lowered 6<sup>th</sup>). The piano joins the recitative

in a series of strident chords expressing the anguish of the miller's predicament. Here, a battle between the keys of G and C takes place, the chords seemingly moving first to a home key of C (m. 35), then, with the return of F# in m. 37, they bring us to a tonic G at m. 38. The poetic statement of confusion is reinforced by our harmonic groundlessness. At the repetition of this phrase, however (m. 38-41), we are somewhat more secure. The conflict of keys is repeated, but we have been through it once before, and we know what's likely to come. (And we have a good idea that the miller knows what's coming, as well).

The resolution at m. 41, first beat, is again to G, but within two beats Schubert moves us back to the original tonality by introducing the dominant of that key (m. 42). At this point, the brook figure returns. Here, the voice repeats the plea for a response, but that plea is not completely articulated until the final phrase; "Tell me, little brook, does she love me?" The brook figure emerges all alone here (52-55), having assimilated the question (Cf. m. 52-53a with 49b-50a). Its unchangeable quality is itself an answer, as the remainder of the song cycle reveals. The brook figure ends as it began—a solid chord on the tonic.

This sort of discussion on "Der Neugierige" suggests the ways in which the musical construction enlarges the poetic concepts to which it is tied. This is the area in which discursive analysis is most successful, since this matching of poetic and musical renderings of the same idea is in fact the discursive function of music. But music's importance lies much deeper than that. It has to do with the matrix and its expression; patterns of sound and of "life itself."

We can know nothing of "Der Neugierige"'s commanding form.

beyond what we learn from the song itself. The matrix and its musical expression cannot be laid side by side and compared. Judging from the music, it is apparent that the commanding form is Schubert's idea of what it means to be in a torment of doubt and indecision, of naive hope mixed with a deeper intuition of eventual despair.

The musician, however, will hesitate to engage in such verbalizations, -at least, initially. He will experience the music for as long as is necessary for him to grasp the understanding of human feeling which led to Schubert's writing of the song. This understanding, as Langer points out, is not the sum of a series of definitions and smaller insights. It is grasped in toto; a Gestalt of human feeling which one knows to be either complete or partial, integral or complete. This insight, communicated to us through the presentational symbolism of the music, is felt by us to be, in some degree, consistent with our own understanding of our humanity. If the feeling in the song is contrived or false, we know it. If the emphases are improper, we feel it. We match up the idea we have caught from the song with our experience of what it means to be human, and we then understand how consistent with the truth that idea is.

The performer comes to intuit that idea through his repeated articulation of its embodied form, and it is then this idea, rather than an ideal performance of the structure,<sup>12</sup> that becomes the touchstone of his work. In his music-making, that idea, or "commanding form," becomes physical expression. Schubert, in writing his songs, gives hints on what to do in order to understand the commanding form of

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<sup>12</sup> Donald Sherburne's "hillock;" See discussion on page 80.

his idea. He includes a few instructions for dynamics, but for the most part the simple notation suffices for his purpose.

Once this commanding form is understood, one can return to the tonal form and judge the adequacy of the structure in the expression of its idea. This is the point at which one may judge whether the work is transparent to the matrix; whether the musical components serve to articulate it or confuse it; whether the structure is too large or too small; and whether the composer's decisions of genre, key, and so on, are appropriate. Engaged in such evaluation, the critic speaks in terms of "clarity," "transparency," "expressiveness," "purity." His judgment rests on the expression itself (the audible form); whether it has integrity -whether it makes sense to itself. When the motives seem to go where the matrix seems to command, the work is successful. Internal conflict in a work is the immediate sign of incongruity between the commanding form and its expression. Sometimes the composer himself comes to understand that his rendition is wrong for the insight, and changes the setting accordingly. We have already mentioned Bruckner's difficulties with the matching of commanding forms and their expression (above, p. 31). Beethoven's Grosse Fugue in Bb M (Op. 133) was conceived originally as the finale for Quartet No. 16 in F, (Op. 135). But having composed it, it became apparent to him that the expressive form far outstripped the Quartet's commanding matrix, and that it demanded a separate existence.<sup>13</sup> Hence the Fugue now stands alone, while

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<sup>13</sup> Beethoven's judgment in the matter has not gone unquestioned. John W. Burk, The Life and Works of Beethoven (New York: Random House, 1943), p. 368, supports the composer's decision, while J.W.N. Sullivan, Beethoven: His Spiritual Development (New York: Vintage Books, 1927), pp. 156-158, believes the Fugue belongs with the Quartet.



another conclusion was written for the Quartet.

Our appreciation, then, of Schubert's "Der Neugierige" has less to do with the details than with the congruence of matrix and expressive form. We ourselves may not speak with brooks, nor sing Lieder or play the piano, for that matter. We may never have been in love. But we sense in this work that Schubert understood what it is like to be in a love-tossed quandry (regardless of whether he had experienced it himself), and we are touched by a new insight into our own nature. We need these understandings which the arts provide, since we as individuals cannot possibly undergo all of the emotional options open to our species. Through the vehicles of grand opera, chamber music and the rest, we are presented understandings of human feeling that fill the gaps of our own understanding and broaden the base of our emotional lives. "Der Neugierige" happens to be a highly transparent symbol, once the symbolic (as opposed to signal) function of the text is understood. -And thanks to this symbol, we have a wider understanding of the range of human feeling.

#### "DER NEUGIERIGE" AS A PATTERN OF SENTIENCE

But music points us not only to an understanding of human feeling, but also to the "pattern of life itself" (Langer). If this is what music is all about, how does our Schubertian Lied relate to this idea? Here we are even further from the traditional role of discursive language. But some suggestions may be made on what this music does, if not on how it does it.

The opening measures of "Der Neugierige" establish a new time

for us. The passage of time has been shown by modern physics not to be universal and uniform. Earlier it was stressed that it is "experienced time" rather than scientific time which regulates our feelings of being in time. Thus, each individual participating in the performance situation has, to this point, been living in his own time. Experienced passage varies from person to person, but an occurrent art such as music tends to take command of a situation, imposing its own passage upon the group of listeners. Even in a recital setting, where "Der Neugierige" follows the performance of five other songs, it establishes a unique flow of time -one which Schubert has sensed to be congruent with the shape of the idea he wishes to make perceptible.

The character of this new time is set by the spare, lights sounds of the piano. Marked "slowly," the passage forces us to live in time as it is imagined that one in the protagonist's position experiences it. The sounds are distended and irregular, though all the while the inexorable step of clock time is much in evidence. There is not much breadth of range in either the vocal or piano part, reflecting the subdued dimensions of such emotional experiences.

At measure 22, a suspension of time, harmony, and feeling occurs. This measure, consisting almost entirely of rest, is experienced in performance as a vast block of silence which effectively dissipates the time established in the first twenty-one measures. The expected motion set up by m. 20 is disappointed; the sixteenth notes stop abruptly, and the resolution of the  $V^7$  chord is delayed. The absence of sound coupled with the tension evoked by this interruption wipes the slate clean. At measure 23, the piano's arpeggios establish a new pattern, characterized by the regular flow of sixteenth-note sets.

The vocal part is in counterpoint with it.

Yet another temporal pattern, at measure 33, returns us to the articulation of the miller's experienced passage. Time almost stands still as the recitative details the very crux of the matter. On these two words hang the whole question of time for the miller -whether or not it will stop entirely. The chordal progression of m. 35-40, full of parallel octaves, draws us further into his subjective state. These broad strokes articulate the driving, clumsy feeling of dogged assertion against a bewildering universe.

At m. 42, the inevitable flow represented by the brook again emerges. There is no relaxation -no ritard- as the piano again presents the brook's statement. The answers to the song's discursive probes lie in that inevitable flow; -not only as a glimpse of the miller's fate, but more importantly as a statement of the composer's understanding of the human situation. This song is a microcosm of that situation, beginning with the quandry of subjective despair, and concluding with the clear and inevitable passage of what we call "time." It is important to note here that this is expressed not so much by the text or harmonic structure. Rather, the import of this song lies in its establishment of a temporal order, and its manipulation of that order to force the listener's experienced passage to correspond with the temporal flow of a significant, universal human feeling. He is allowed to grasp an experience which he may never have undergone personally, and he is all the more human because of it.

#### "TO MUSIC" AS AN INFINITIVE

At this point, we may look once more at our question of the

musical experience. Obviously, the discursive meaning of a song text, and even the harmonic progression, could be learned from the printed score. There need be no sound for this to happen. But if the song's true import is to be grasped, there must be sound. The song must be performed. Just as, in the graphic arts, the "visible character is its entire being,"<sup>14</sup> so with music, it is in its audible character that its meaning lies. The import of music is in what it does as it is being performed, not in what it "is." Music is not "out there," waiting to be performed; it does not in fact exist outside of performance. The Romance languages have reinforced the confusion by countering this very crucial point. In French we "jouons au musique;" in German it is Musikspielen;" and we, too, "play music." To properly communicate what music is all about, perhaps we ought to speak of "musicing" -a function all by itself rather than using a generic term and relegating the functional qualities to ~~subs~~idiary actions such as bowing and blowing.

To understand musicing as an action would go far in setting the art again in focus. No longer should either printed notes or the subject of appreciation classes be confusedly termed "music." Instead, "to music" is the act of making audible the patterns of sentience -of passage. A musical experience has as its chief necessity the presence of one who musics. Nor would "music" be confused with the sounds that result from musicing. Rather, these tonal productions should be understood as patterns or symbols whose vital import is inextricably bound up in the productions themselves. Its meaning is something other than musical outside of the occurrent moment. It may be literal or senti-

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<sup>14</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 48. See above, p. 28.

mental, the product of a happy memory or joyful anticipation, but the significance of the music symbol's secondary aspects, such as poetic reference or the pleasures of silently reading musical notation, remain secondary.

This means, of course, that the importance of "recorded music" is also non-musical. The archival connotations of the very word, "record," are quite suggestive at this point. Since the tonal productions of a musical performance are not themselves music, their relics on wax or tape can hardly qualify as such. Regardless of fidelity and delusion of "presence," the experience of listening to a tonal record is something other than musical. No one is musicing in such an event. There is not the establishment of a new temporality -basic to the musical experience- since the listener's own strain of experienced passage enters into the entire moment and has a causal effect upon it -but not upon the tonal symbol. The response of each hearer has something to do with the way a musician performs. Even if his musicing is recorded before a live audience, the recording's listeners contribute nothing to the experience. For that recorded experience is tentative, and, even more importantly, it is repeatable.

Human experience, however, is not repeatable. No moment in time ever comes again, and this existential insight is an integral aspect of the musical experience. One cannot grasp a moment in time, and as Sartre so eloquently points out, the same is true of musicing. The "buds and droplets" pass, but it is in their passing that their meaning for us lies. It is in their passage, not their nature, that they open up large vistas of human understanding for us; for they reinforce for our perception something we already know -the central fact of our

existence is change.

Given the view of the musical event as an active one, and calling to mind the discussion of "semblance" above, we should underscore our initial assertion that to look for the "meaning" of music is to ask the wrong question. Further, it is inappropriate to ask whether the "music" is in the composer's initial conception or the printed page, the vibrating strings or the listener's inner ear, and so forth. Rather, the vital import of the act of musicing lies in the illusions created by the confluence of all these elements. It is the virtual entity -the illusion of passage- which carries import to participants in the occasion.

But it still may be asked where, physically, is this virtual entity? Is it external to the percipient, waiting to be grasped by him? To say, as we have, that the entire being of the musical event is its audible nature may conjure old arguments regarding the nature of sound -whether unheard vibrations are sounds, etc.. It might be asked, for instance, whether the stone-deaf Beethoven, playing his piano in a woodland cottage far from the earshot of anyone else, created music? Customary categories of physics do not help us. The realm of illusion and experienced passage involves so much more than physical causation that new standpoints -new categories of explanation- are required. In response to these problems, the question of the locus of tonal import will be discussed in the final pages of this paper's seventh chapter, based on the intervening material which will provide this new standpoint.

In the latter sections of the present chapter, the musical symbol has been described, using as an example one of Schubert's finest

songs. Some definition of the role of the commanding form has been given, as well as an appeal for a return to a more active notion of the musical art. The "musical passage" is seen to be a most apt denotation of what music is all about -the establishment of new temporal orders through auditory means. The following chapter will introduce some aspects of a philosophical system which is of enormous help to one interested in knowing more about the nature of the musical act. The fundamentals of organic philosophy, as understood by Alfred North Whitehead, will be detailed in order to provide a metaphysical foundation for the inspired insights of Susanne K. Langer in respect to the function and purpose of music performance.

PART II

ORGANIC PHILOSOPHY:

PROBLEMS OF TIME AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE



## Chapter 4

### SPECIALIZED GROUNDWORK IN ORGANIC PHILOSOPHY

For Alfred North Whitehead, speculative philosophy may begin nowhere but in the hard, pragmatic stuff of life where "common sense" reigns, and where observed phenomena are very real indeed. He agrees with Plato that there are perfect possibilities and corresponding actual forms, but his approach reverses that of the ancient philosopher. Whitehead's philosophy begins with the "actual entity."

Actual entities -also termed actual occasions- are the final real things of which the world is made up. There is no going beyond actual entities to find anything more real. They differ among themselves: God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space.<sup>1</sup>

These entities are indivisible droplets of time; yet, for purposes of analysis, phases of development (the technical term is "con-  
crescence") may be abstracted and discussed. These phases of concrescence do occur, but not sequentially. They happen all at once.

An actual occasion is analysable. The analysis discloses operations transforming entities which are individually alien, into components of a complex which is concretely one. The term "feeling" will be used as the generic description of such operations. We thus say that an actual occasion is a concrescence effected by a process of feelings.<sup>2</sup>

This word "feeling" is a mere technical term; but it has been chosen to suggest that functioning through which the concrescent actuality appropriates the datum so as to make it its own.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper & Row, 1929), pp. 27-28.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 322.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 249.

All reality, then, is comprised of actual occasions. Everything we perceive as an object is in fact of "society" of these occasions in a particular extensive relationship, sharing feelings (also called "prehensions").

#### THE PHASES OF CONCRESCENCE

The components of the concrescence process may be described as "phases," remembering the non-temporality of that process. The first, or "primary" (sometimes called "conformal") phase is that in which the past is felt in its raw objective character. This is the causal ground out of which spring further, "conceptual" feelings. In Whitehead's words;

In a process of concrescence, there is a succession of phases in which new prehensions arise by integration of prehensions in antecedent phases. . . . The process continues till all prehensions are components in the one determinate integral satisfaction.<sup>4</sup>

There are three successive phases of feelings, namely, a phase of conformal feelings, one of "conceptual" feelings, and one of "comparative" feelings, including "propositional" feelings in this last species. In the conformal feelings the how of feeling reproduces what is felt. Some conformation is necessary as a basis of vector transition, whereby the past is synthesized within the present. The one eternal object or "potentiality" [-see p.57] in its two-way function, as a determinate of the datum and as a determinate of the subjective form, is thus relational.<sup>5</sup>

The "conformal" phase then receives the past as its datum. It involves the transference of feelings from the past to the present, conditioning the present while providing the fodder for novelty. The immediate present, in its initial phase, reproduces the past. Sometimes Whitehead speaks of actual entities as "dipolar" in nature. The

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 249.

conformal phase is the "physical" pole, while "conceptual" phases comprise the "mental" pole.

The mental pole is explored in detail in Chapter 6 of this paper. It is best described as Whitehead's "Category IV: The Category of Conceptual Valuation";

From each physical feeling there is the derivation of a purely conceptual feeling whose datum is the eternal object exemplified in the definiteness of the actual entity, or the nexus [see below], physically felt.

This category maintains the old principle that mentality originates from sensitive experience. It lays down the principle that all sensitive experience originates mental operations. . . .

The mental pole originates as the conceptual counterpart of operations in the physical pole. The two poles are inseparable in their origination.<sup>6</sup>

#### NEXUS AND SOCIETIES

The world in which we live is one of identifiable forms and substances, not chaotic swarms of actual occasions. This is because some occasions are experienced by us as sharing certain characteristics, and they are therefore perceived as displaying a factor of "togetherness" -as a "nexus" of occasions.

A nexus is a set of actual entities in the unity of the relatedness constituted by their prehensions of each other, or -what is the same thing conversely expressed- contributed by their objectifications in each other.<sup>7</sup>

The operation "whereby a nexus of actual occasions . . . is prehended not as an aggregate, not as a many, but as a unity, as one macrocosmic entity,"<sup>8</sup> is called "Transmutation." Through transmutation

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 379.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>8</sup>Donald W. Sherburne, A Key to Whitehead's "Process and Reality" (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 73.

a multiplicity of occasions is prehended as a unit by virtue of their common objectification of some one eternal object.<sup>9</sup> "The eternal objects," writes Whitehead, "are the pure potentials of the universe."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup>In Figure 2, becoming occasion A prehends data X, Y, and Z as one occasion qualified by eternal object "R" (say, "red"). The simple physical feelings of the first phase (series "a") give rise to conceptual feeling "b," which has as its datum the common element of those feelings, eternal object "R." Still in phase II, the occasion contrasts (at y) that conceptual datum with the physical datum of the physical feelings, giving rise to feeling "c" which objectifies nexus W as a single entity in terms of its embodied eternal object, "red." "C," then, is the becoming occasion's feeling of nexus W. In this way the actual world is perceived as consisting of objects having qualities. This is the "master principle" by which high-grade organisms "eliminate, by negative prehension [which] holds its datum as inoperative in the progressive concrescence of prehensions constituting the unity of the subject]<sup>a</sup>, the irrelevant accidents in its environment, and . . . elicit massive attention to every variety of systematic order."<sup>b</sup> . . . [<sup>a</sup>Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 35.      <sup>b</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 483].

Figure 2  
Transmutation

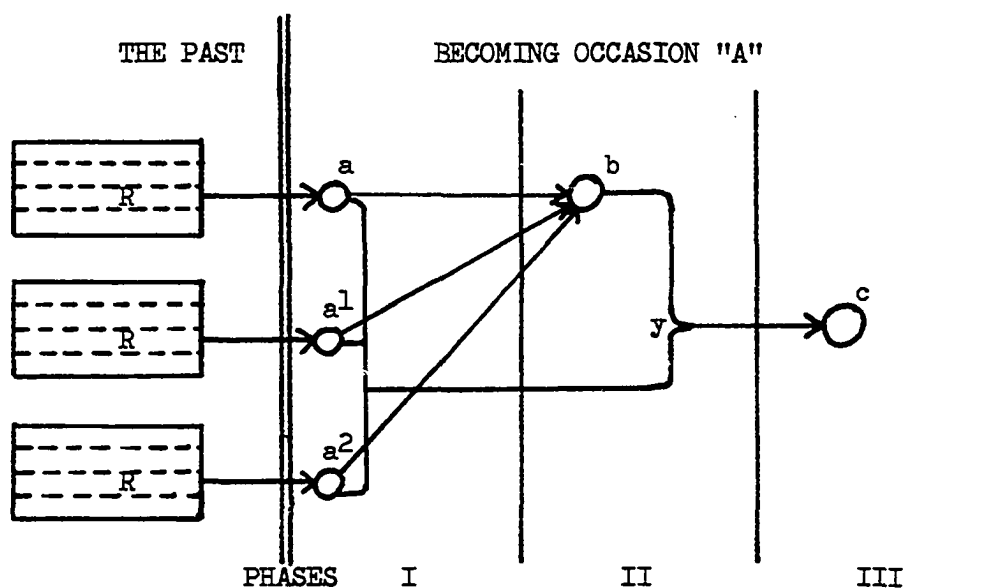


Diagram from Sherburne, A Key, p. 74 (with some changes).

<sup>10</sup>Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 226.

An eternal object in abstraction from any one particular actual entity is a potentiality for ingression into actual entities. In its ingression into any one actual entity, either as relevant or irrelevant, it retains its potentiality of indefinite diversity of modes of ingression, a potential indetermination rendered determinate in this instance. . . . Potentiality becomes reality; and yet retains its message of alternatives which the actual entity has avoided. In the constitution of an actual entity: -whatever component is red, might have been green; and whatever component is loved, might have been coldly esteemed. . . . If the term "eternal objects" is disliked, the term "potentials" would be suitable.<sup>11</sup>

When Whitehead speaks of a "society," he refers to a nexus with "social order."

A nexus enjoys "social order" where (i) there is a common element of form illustrated in the definiteness of each of its included actual entities, and (ii) this common element of form arises in each member of the nexus by reason of the conditioners imposed upon it by its prehensions of some other members of the nexus, and (iii) these prehensions impose that condition of reproduction by reason of their inclusion by positive feelings of that common form. . . . The common form is the "defining characteristic" of the society.<sup>12</sup>

Endurance in the actual world is produced in this inheritance of a "common form" through the action of the primary phase. In this way, organic philosophy accounts for identity. -I do not perceive a "chair" because I impose such a prehension upon an indiscriminate nexus. Rather, by virtue of the "positive prehensions of common order" from occasion to occasion in that nexus, the eternal objects comprising the common elements of a chair are in fact objectified and transferred within that nexus, so that I perceive it as such.

The "enduring object" is a special kind of society. It is a society "whose social order has taken the special form of 'personal order'."<sup>13</sup> Personal order occurs "when the genetic relatedness of its members orders these members 'serially'."<sup>14</sup> It is to be conceived as a

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.    <sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 50-51.    <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 50.    <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

strain of temporally contiguous occasions in which the reenactment of the society's entire history is imposed upon each entity as it, in its turn as the sole occasion of the society enjoying immediacy at any one time, achieves satisfaction.

Whitehead identifies the molecule as an example of the enduring object, for reasons best stated by John B. Cobb, Jr.;

The molecule is typical of enduring objects in the extreme similarity of the successive occasions that make it up. Whitehead shows that this is caused by the overwhelming preponderance of the physical pole or physical feelings. Each occasion feels and reenacts the preceding occasion's feeling and reenactment of its predecessor, and so on indefinitely. The successive occasions are comparatively little affected by other past occasions and the novelty of the new occasion is both trivial in itself and ineffective for the future. Enduring objects provide the things of the world with stability.<sup>15</sup>

The enduring object, then, exemplifies the personally-ordered society in its most conservative state. But in some societies, the mental pole dominates, just as the physical pole dominates in molecules. Whitehead names such a society a "living person." -"The defining characteristic of a living person is some definite type of hybrid prehensions transmitted from occasion to occasion of its existence."<sup>16</sup>

A "hybrid prehension" is one in which a past occasion is objectified in terms of one of its conceptual prehensions. It is a physical feeling of a conceptual one.

#### THE PRESIDING OCCASION

All the life in the body is the life of the individual cells.

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<sup>15</sup> John B. Cobb, Jr., A Christian Natural Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965), p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 163.

Thus there are millions upon millions of centres of life in each animal body. So what needs to be explained is . . . unifying control, by reason of which we not only have unified behaviour, which can be observed by others, but also consciousness of a unified experience.

. . . In a living body of a high type there are grades of occasions so coordinated by their paths of inheritance through the body, that a peculiar richness of inheritance is enjoyed by various occasions in some parts of the body. Finally, the brain is coordinated so that a peculiar richness of inheritance is enjoyed now by this and now by that part; and thus there is produced the presiding personality at that moment in the body. Owing to the delicate organization of the body, there is a returned influence, an inheritance of character derived from the presiding occasion and modifying the occasions through the rest of the body.<sup>17</sup>

Thus the functional divisions within a high-grade organism provide for order through the emergence of a dominant occasion which responds to and which has a special causal effect upon the body's occasions. This "presiding occasion" "is the final node, or intersection, of a complex structure of many enduring objects. Such a structure pervades the human body."<sup>18</sup> The wealth of contrasts issues in an intensity of experience. "The human body is thus conscious of its body inheritance."<sup>19</sup>

#### THE CATEGORY OF THE ULTIMATE

There is no transition within a single occasion; neither is there anything in the make-up of an actual occasion that necessitates the rise of other occasions in the future. But new occasions do arise; -time marches on. Whitehead calls this fact of existence "creativity." Creativity is neither actual nor causal. It is "an ultimate which is actual by virtue of its accidents."<sup>20</sup> It embraces both the self-

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 165-166.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 166-167.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

causation of actual entities and the interrelatedness of those entities, and it is the "principle of novelty" whereby novelty is introduced into the world.<sup>21</sup> With two other ultimate notions; "many," and "one," it comprises the "Category of the Ultimate" which is presupposed throughout the organic view.

"Creativity" is the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact. It is that ultimate principle by which the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. . . .

The "creative advance" is the application of this ultimate principle of creativity to each novel situation which it originates.<sup>22</sup>

The oneness of the universe, and the oneness of each element in the universe, repeat themselves to the crack of doom in the creative advance from creature to creature, each creature including in itself the whole of history and exemplifying the self-identity of things and their mutual diversities.<sup>23</sup>

#### TIME

The passage of time occurs as each entity "perishes" and is superceded by others. Thus, time is epochal. This "transition from particular instant to particular instant," wrote Whitehead, is (in Locke's language);

. . . the "perpetually perishing" which is one aspect of the notion of time; and in another aspect the transition is the origination of the present in conformity with the "power" of the past.<sup>24</sup>

William Christian characterizes this process as a "becoming of continuity," as distinguished from a "continuity of becoming." In this he quotes a paper given by Whitehead in 1927;

. . . Supercession cannot be regarded as the continuous unfolding of a continuum. I express this conclusion by the statement

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 30, 31.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 347-348.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 320.



that time is epochal. The occasion B which acquires concretion so as to supercede A embodies a definite quantum of time which I call the epochal character of the concrescence.<sup>25</sup>

That this "becoming of continuity" procedes, instead of halting at the satisfaction of any one occasion, is expressed by "creativity," which is the "universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact."<sup>26</sup> This "matter of fact" is that all things become, and all things perish; and "time" is an abstraction expressing that fact.

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<sup>25</sup>Quoted in William Christian, An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 71: from Alfred North Whitehead, "Time," in Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy (New York: Longmans, Green, 1927).

<sup>26</sup>Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 31.

## Chapter 5

### DURATION IN BERGSON AND IN WHITEHEAD

It is appropriate here to draw together the notion of duration as found in Bergson (and Langer) and that suggested by Whitehead. For both conceptions, duration has thickness -it takes time. For his part, Bergson emphasizes the properties of flow or continuation as essential to the duration. It is "perpetual becoming; . . . Becoming in general, i.e., a becoming which is not the becoming of any particular thing, and this is what I have called the time the state occupies."<sup>1</sup>

To understand this transcendence of the particular, Bergson would have us place ourselves, "by an effort of intuition, in the concrete flow of duration;

. . . The intuition of our duration, far from leaving us suspended in the void as pure analysis would do, brings us into contact with a whole continuity of durations which we must try to follow, whether downwards or upwards; in both cases we transcend ourselves. In the first we advance towards a more and more attenuated duration, the pulsations of which, being more rapid than ours, and dividing our simple sensation, dilute its quality into quantity: at the limit would be pure homogeneity, that pure repetition by which we define materiality. Advancing in the other direction, we approach a duration which strains, contracts, and intensifies itself more and more; which is an eternity of death, but an eternity of life. A living and therefore still moving eternity in which our own particular duration would be included as the vibrations are in light; an eternity which would be the concentration of all durations, as materiality is its dispersion. Between these two extreme limits intuition moves, and this movement is the very essence of metaphysics.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Henri Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril, 1955), p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

Given this concept and those expressed in the earlier discussion of Bergson, we can see that according to this view, "duration" is the reality of process that is inherent in every aspect of the universe. It is the ongoingness of things -but of nothing in particular. It is that which fills moments and gives them their character, so that it sometimes takes much longer (in experienced time) to live through that moment than it does others. It is the drawing-up of the past into the present, and the rush of the present as it becomes the past. There can be a multitude of durations within an experience, each of which corresponds to that which Whitehead calls the occasion in its extension.

The extent to which Bergson would affirm the power of intuition to allow an actual occasion to become aware of its own duration, Whitehead finds it necessary to object. An occasion "presides" over its own becoming, but there is no awareness of its own process; -such awareness would become a factor in concrescence and this would violate the ontological principle. A becoming occasion is not yet actual.<sup>3</sup> It is possible that Bergson, in the above passage, has in mind what Whitehead calls "enduring objects," not simply becoming occasions. An enduring object is a personally-ordered society of occasions, and corresponds with, among other things, that which is generally thought to be the human personality. In such a society, there is massive awareness of the

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<sup>3</sup>Not all Whitehead scholars would subscribe to this statement. For instance, although he concedes there is plenty of textual evidence in Process and Reality suggesting that Whitehead may well have viewed past occasions as actual, Sherburne holds the position that "an actual entity, in as far as it is actual, is an acting entity," and that "past occasions [thus] are not actual." See Donald Sherburne, "The 'Whitehead Without God' Debate: The Rejoinder," Process Studies, 1:2 (Summer 1971), 101-113.

past, an accumulated awareness of identity -as having a unique history. Here, an awareness of becoming is possible, but only as an inheritance from the past. The enduring object may be aware of its having evolved, and of having been immersed in the universal flux, but at the crucial point of the present unfulfilled moment, again Bergson's "effort of intuition" is denied by the character of the becoming occasion feeling that moment. It may not feel its internal process.

There is a high degree of correspondence between the two philosophers' use of the term "duration." We have seen that Whitehead refers to a single slice of temporal extensiveness as "duration," and to that function of perception which corresponds with an individual's conviction of "some present condition of the world" as presented duration. All occasions within a single duration are contemporaries and share in a "unison of becoming" which precludes causal interaction.

The Whiteheadian notion of "duration" suggests a spatio-temporal spread of the present moment which, while commensurate with the extension of any single occasion within it, is something more than that. Following an appeal to the intellectual apprehension of meaning in the notion of a present that is happening simultaneously with any one event throughout the universe, Whitehead describes the duration as "the whole of nature simultaneous with the event;"

Notice that the pattern requires a duration involving a definite lapse of time, and not merely an instantaneous moment. Such a moment is more abstract, in that it merely denotes a certain relation of contiguity between the concrete events. Thus a duration is spatialized; . . . A duration, as the field of the pattern realized in the actualization of one of its contained events, is

an epoch, i.e., an arrest.<sup>4</sup>

The essence of a duration in Bergson's thought is becoming; process itself. The same is true of Whitehead. Within a single duration there is no temporal transition involving contemporary occasions, and each of these occasions is viewed as a "quantum" of space-time which exhibits certain aspects of passage -such as the phases of concrescence- but none that involves succession. The "genetic passage" of those phases is in direct contradistinction with physical time. It is a growing-together of the many into the one which somehow presupposes the one. It is ultimately unexplainable. -"The actual entity is [intellectually] divisible; but in fact it is undivided."<sup>5</sup> "The creature is extensive, but . . . its act of becoming is not extensive."<sup>6</sup> Whitehead cites the witness of William James as he sets forth this epochal view of occasions;

Either your experience is of no content, of no change, or it is of a perceptible amount of content, or change. Your acquaintance with reality grows literally by buds and drops of perception. Intellectually and on reflection you can divide these into components, but as immediately given, they come totally or not at all.<sup>7</sup>

The nature of process as exhibited by these sole units of actuality is better conceived as the appearance of buds of perception than by causal or whole/part temporal lineality. It is the concrete

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<sup>4</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, Science in the Modern World (New York: Free Press, 1953), pp. 124-125.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper & Row, 1929), p. 347.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 105-106; Cf. William James, Some Problems in Philosophy (New York: Longmans, 1911), Chapter X.

attribute of the ultimate category; creativity. It is the means by which the unity of multiplicity and uniqueness is accomplished.

"Becoming" not only characterizes the occasions and the duration which embraces them. Viewed in another way, "becoming" is what the entity is. What it does is what it is. "An actual entity feels as it does feel in order to be the actual entity which it is. In this way the actual entity satisfies Spinoza's notion of substance: it is causa sui."<sup>8</sup> Whitehead's "Ninth Category of Explanation" is this; "That how an actual entity becomes constitutes what that actual entity is; so that the two descriptions of an actual entity are not independent. Its 'being' is constituted by its 'becoming.' This is the 'principle of process.'"<sup>9</sup>

We have noted the "Ontological Principle," which means "that actual entities are the only reasons: so that to search for a reason is to search for one or more actual entities."<sup>10</sup> That which is actual, then, is found only in the monads called "actual entities," whose essence is process. Process also denotes the nature of durations, which simply express the spatio-temporal nature of occasions. Duration, then, is the extensive attribute of process, and its chief function in the Philosophy of Organism is to delineate the past and the future.

Regarding Bergson's notion of the pure duration, we again find agreement between the two philosophers. One could hardly find a more apt characterization of Whitehead's cosmology than Bergson's description of the thrust of the universe;

There is, on the one hand, a multiplicity of successive states of consciousness, and, on the other, a unity which binds them together.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 34-35.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 36-37.

. . . We can picture to ourselves as many durations as we wish, all very different from each other, although each of them, on being reduced to concepts -that is, observed externally from two opposing points of view, always comes in the end to the same indefinable combination of the many and the one.<sup>11</sup>

By means of such statements, Bergson describes his vision of the universal process which comprises the sole absolute metaphysically knowable. -Knowable, yet undefinable. Whitehead cannot accept Bergson's fear of "spatialization," viewing instead the "inexplicability" of concreteness to be a limitation of language.<sup>12</sup> He agrees, however, that analysis distracts from real process, and that "the sole appeal is to intuition."<sup>13</sup> Yet it is to the making-knowable of this elusive "combination of the many and the one" that he devotes his cosmology. Throughout his extensive metaphysic, this principle of everlasting process is paramount. Within this on-goingness, everything that is actual (multiplicity) is drawn up into the concrescence of a single, becoming occasion; yet that unity is but fleeting, and that occasion, having achieved satisfaction, passes into the past -the vast company of objectively immortal occasions. "The many become one and are increased by one."<sup>14</sup>

This principle of the nature of things, named "pure duration" by Bergson, is what Whitehead calls the Ultimate Category of Creativity. We have already noted something of its nature in the preceding chapter. This ultimate principle, as it is applied to actuality, is seen as the "creative advance."

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<sup>11</sup>Bergson, An Introduction, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup>Whitehead, Process and Reality, Cf. esp. pp. 336, 489.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction. The novel entity is at once the togetherness of the "many" which it finds, and also it is one among the disjunctive "many" which it leaves; it is a novel entity, disjunctively among the many entities which it synthesizes.<sup>15</sup>

It is because it enjoys no metaphysical status of actuality that this creative advance is inexplicable directly. It is known only . . . through the forms in which it participates. Philosophy abstracts its reality from the nature of things, and attempts to present it to our understanding in other -usually linguistic- forms. But creativity is nothing less than the basic principle of the nature of things; it is knowable only by virtue of those things (actual entities), and by means of intuition.<sup>16</sup>

With Whitehead's "creativity," -"the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact," and Bergson's "pure duration," which characterizes absolute reality and the ever-rolling stream of pure time, we have a general agreement in regard to the nature of things, as well as a foundation for further discussion.

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Langer's discussion of the ultimate epistemological status of intuition (above, p. 20) should be recalled here.



## Chapter 6

### THE STATUS OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

The material of this discussion will be the function of the becoming occasion's supplemental phases, and, in particular, the role of propositional feelings in those phases. Donald Sherburne's diagram of the Phases of Concrescence (p. 71) may prove helpful in visualizing the concepts we shall explore.

Most of the dynamics involved are already familiar. Circle b represents Category IV, the Category of Conceptual Valuation.

From each physical feeling there is the derivation of a purely conceptual feeling whose datum is the eternal object objectified in the definiteness of the actual entity, or the nexus, physically felt.<sup>1</sup>

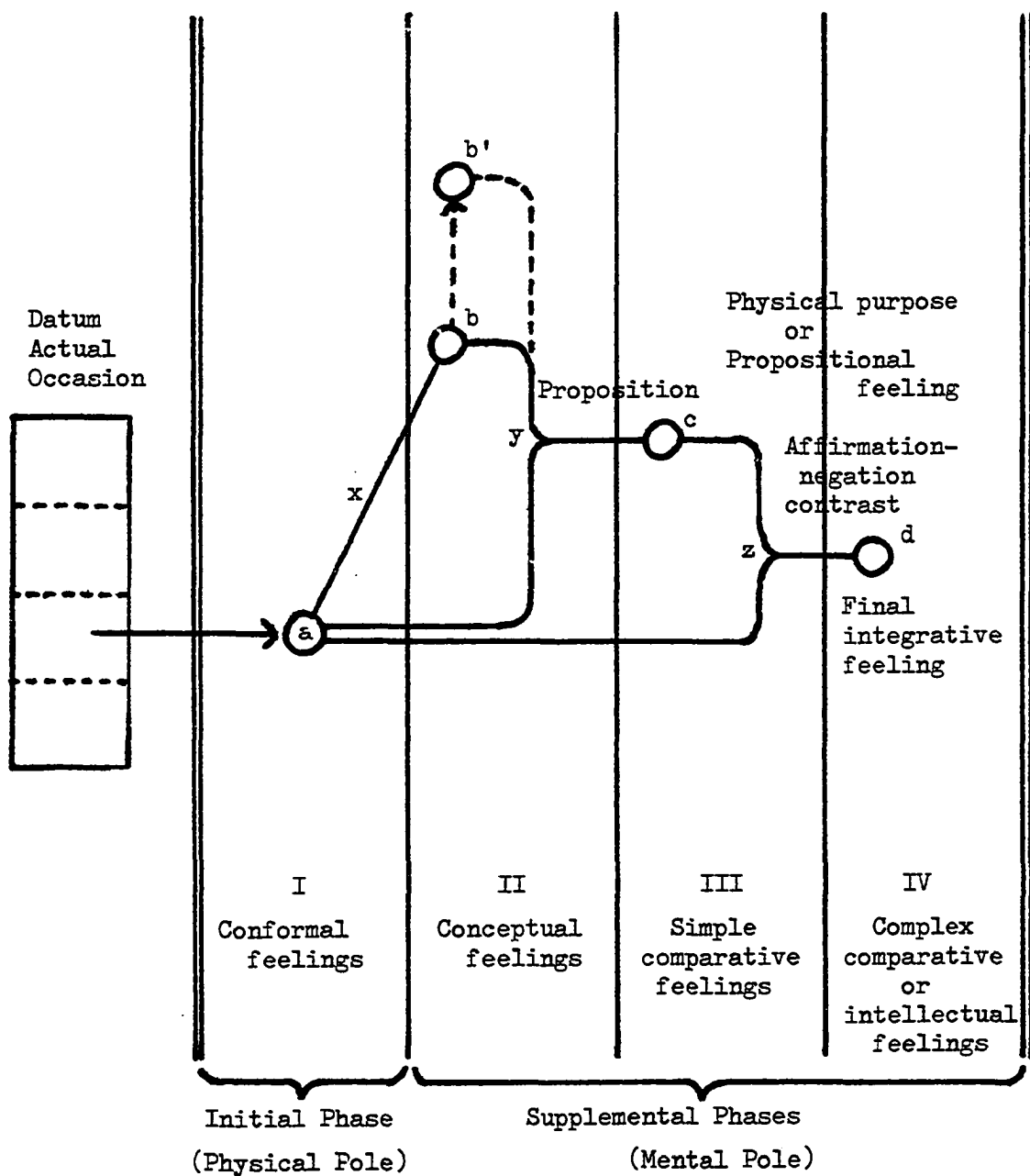
The feeling marked x in the figure demonstrates the physical origin of this purely conceptual feeling. This is the immediate perception of the universe of possibilities by means of a "projection" of those possibilities (eternal objects) as actualized in the datum occasions or nexūs. This immediate perception is named "presentational immediacy" by Whitehead, while the process of physical inheritance is called "causal efficacy." These comprise the two "pure" modes within the theory of perception.

Presentational immediacy is an outgrowth from the complex datum implanted by causal efficacy. But, by the originative power of the supplemental phase, what was vague, ill-defined, and hardly relevant in causal efficacy, becomes distinct, well defined, and importantly relevant in presentational immediacy. . . . The supple-

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper & Row, 1929), p. 379.

Figure 3

The Functions of the Supplemental Phases<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Donald W. Sherburne, A Key to Whitehead's "Process and Reality" (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 40, with some additions.

mental phase lifts the presented duration into vivid distinctness, so that the vague efficacy of the indistinct external world in the immediate past is precipitated upon the representative regions in the contemporary present. In the usual language, the sensations are projected.<sup>3</sup>

All occasions perceive in both modes, the vast majority merging them in a simple comparative feeling (y), with no further contrasts.

Category V, Conceptual Reversion, is denoted by b'.

There is a secondary origination of conceptual feelings with data which are partially identical with, and partially diverse from, the eternal objects forming the data in the primary phase of the mental pole [phase II in Fig. 3]; the determination of identity and diversity on the subjective aim at attaining depth of intensity by reason of contrast.<sup>4</sup>

"Note," says Whitehead, "that Category IV concerns conceptual reproduction of physical feelings, and Category V concerns conceptual diversity from physical feeling."<sup>5</sup>

Thus the first phase of the mental pole [b of Fig. 3] is conceptual reproduction, and the second phase [b'] is a phase of conceptual reversion. In this second phase the proximate novelties are conceptually felt. This is the process by which the subsequent enrichment of subjective forms, both in qualitative pattern and in intensity through contrast, is made possible by the positive conceptual prehension of relevant alternatives, . . . It is the category by which novelty enters the world.<sup>6</sup>

In phase II the conceptual feelings enter into concrescence, and their data are then held in contrast with the datum of the original physical feeling. In most occasions -those dominated by causal efficacy- the feeling (c) of that contrast is a simple "physical purpose." This means that the eternal object felt conceptually sinks back into fact and is no longer felt (as at b') as pure possibility. Once again,

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<sup>3</sup>Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 262.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 380.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 380-381, my emphasis.

as at a, it is felt as actualized. The conceptual feeling is said to be "valued down."

If, however, this eternal object which is the datum of the conceptual feeling retains some element of its transcendence -some aspect of novelty (valuation up), then that contrast is no longer a simple integration of fact and fancy. It is a proposition, holding in contrast what is with what might be.

. . . Now a new kind of entity presents itself. Such entities are the tales that might be told about particular actualities. Such entities are neither actual entities, nor eternal objects, nor feelings. They are propositions. A proposition must be true or false.

. . . . .

A proposition, while preserving the indeterminateness of an eternal object, makes an incomplete abstraction from determinate actual entities.<sup>7</sup>

In the cases, then, when propositions do arise, c is named a "propositional feeling." This prehension is not yet integrated into concrescence, since it retains the indeterminateness of the eternal object from which it is derived. This element of novelty, once introduced, must be drawn into formal contrast with the perceptions of causal efficacy in order to determine the role -if any- which this novelty will play in the final satisfaction.

The final contrast, represented in the diagram by z, is the "affirmation-negation contrast."

It is the contrast between the affirmation of objectified fact in the physical feeling, and the mere potentiality, which is the negation of such affirmation, in the propositional feeling. It is the contrast between "in fact" and "might be," in respect to particular instances in this actual world.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 392-393.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 407.

It is important to remember that nearly all occasions achieve satisfaction at physical purpose, and that with propositions and the affirmation-negation contrast we are speaking of comparatively rare occurrences. For when an occasion does entertain novelty in respect to particular actualizations, the conditions for consciousness are met.

The subjective form of the feeling of this [affirmation-negation] contrast is consciousness. Thus in experience, consciousness arises by reason of intellectual feelings, and in proportion to the variety and intensity of such feelings. . . .

This account agrees with the plain facts of our conscious experience. Consciousness flickers; and even at its brightest, there is a small focal region of clear illumination, and a large penumbral region of experience which tells of intense experience in dim apprehension. The simplicity of clear consciousness is no measure of the complexity of complete experience. Also this character of our experience suggests that consciousness is the crown of experience, only occasionally attained, not its necessary base.<sup>9</sup>

Consciousness requires more than mere entertainment of theory. It is the feeling of the contrast of theory, as mere theory, with fact, as mere fact.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the subjective form of the final integrated feeling (d) is consciousness. "Consciousness," affirms Whitehead, "is how we feel the affirmation-negation contrast."<sup>11</sup> This feeling varies in intensity, contingent upon the degree of novelty valued up in earlier conceptual phases. In the discussion below of music and its performance, this view of consciousness as the feeling-form of a contrast involving fact and fancy will become increasingly relevant.

With this understanding of the supplemental phases, including the notions of perception and the status of propositions, the foundations for further exploration are before us. The discussion of aesthetic function will begin with a study of how presentational symbolism is

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 407-408.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 286.


<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 372.







perceived by the becoming occasion, followed by a description of the ontological status of artistic illusion. The purpose of this approach is, in harmony with the stated viewpoint of this paper, to gain tools for understanding what it is that music does.

#### THE PREHENSION OF PRESENTATIONAL SYMBOLS

In all sign function, nexūs are felt as representing other nexūs. A certain pattern of sounds caused by approaching footsteps represents a master's approach to a faithful dog. This is signal function. When those nexūs suggest purely conceptual nexūs—in a frightened girl's imagination, for instance—symbolization is involved.

Discursive symbolization, it will be recalled, is basically linear and entails symbols whose reference is largely arbitrary. The series of markings "s-y-m-b-o-l" have an internal relationship that "b-l-y-m-s-o" does not have. That set of relations enables the percipient to transmute them as a nexus, but it exists only by virtue of the action of the perceiver's occasions. The meaning is learned, so that one order of the letters is more significant than the other. For a monolingual Chinese peasant, no relationship beyond a purely spatial one exists between those letters. Perceptions of a relationship and the subsequent ability to transmute that symbol so that it can represent a concept is an acquired capacity which we call "learning to read." In that process concepts are related to certain symbols in a relatively arbitrary way. Thus in discursive symbolization, the symbol-nexus itself has no relationship of form with its concept-nexus. The symbol-nexus may be altered at will (translation or codification) as long as the relationship of possibility and actualization are agreed upon.

Such a formal relationship does exist, however, between the presentational symbol-nexus and its concept. This stick figure  is instantly recognizable to virtually all humans with sight, and our Chinese peasant would have no trouble transmuting his visual perception of this spatial nexus into a feeling of a conceptual nexus -"man." No particular man, just man. A similar figure, in fact, denotes "man" in Chinese script. As we have seen in earlier sections, this virtually instantaneous transmutation is due to the congruence of the relationship of parts exhibited by this symbol with the relationship of parts exhibited by the concept represented -in this case, the general physical form held in common by all men. The non-human animal has no capacity for the establishment of these formal relationships, since it involves the retention of conceptual feelings as valued up for their own sake -a process characterizing the latter steps of concrescence.

Moreover, the significance of  is one that must be grasped as a totality or not at all.  does not look at all like the head and trunk of a man,  his arms, and so forth. The understanding is not a progressive one like that of a sentence; our peasant would never be convinced that  plus  plus  equalled "man." The separate marks have no attendant concepts that may be assembled into a larger one. But the relationship of parts they exhibit when assembled in a certain way does represent a concept, and thus it has meaning. This is the function of the presentational symbol. Unlike the discursive symbol, no previous experience of the symbol itself is required for its understanding. The presentational symbol presents its significance completely and immediately, primarily through its own form. To make any change at all in the symbol is to alter its meaning.

As an example of presentational symbolism, consider the folk song of a Louisiana fisherman. Such a symbol, which is a tonal society, could be perceived in many ways. A pet hound dog might perceive it signally, so that for her it means that her master is present. A human with no musical understanding might perceive it as a discursive symbol, which "means" that the old man is sad and weary of hard work. Such a response is a learned one, based upon attitudes of, perhaps, social concern and historical prototypes.

But the one who hears it musically hears the form itself as it is presented to him. It includes the nexus of individuality (signal function), and it may well denote certain particular nexūs of circumstance (discursive symbolization), but when it functions presentationally, certain other concept-nexūs are represented, solely because their forms are congruent with the tonal society which the fisherman sings. Pitch, intensity, individuality, and many other attributes contribute to the symbol, as do ♡ and ^ to the symbol ✱, but it is a great deal more than the sum of its parts.

Such formal congruence can be circumstantial or intentional. Clouds often assume shapes that present formal attributes directly to our perception. But the most important presentational symbols are consciously created, and of these, those whose formal datum is an aspect of human experience or feeling comprise art symbols.

The creation of art symbols requires vast amounts of conceptual origination. As the artist confronts his material, he must be able to know its signal and discursive possibilities and limitations; he must be capable of facile manipulation of that material so that its formal import can be altered to suit his imagination; but for great art, this



technical knowledge must be matched with a fertile imagination. In Whiteheadian terms, the artist must be able to value up the conceptual feelings from his experience which derive from his hybrid physical feelings of past nexūs, which in turn he understands to embody the forms of human feeling. The more universal these conceptual feelings, the greater the nexus of conceptual feelings which he will attempt to re-present in his art symbol. -That is, the greater will its value be in the advance to intensity. If his technical ability is strong, the artist will be able to so manipulate his material that it will embody his concept-insight in the same way that ★ embodies the concept of "man." The Louisiana fisherman thus re-presents a total symbol that shares the same relationship of parts as does the transmuted nexus of feeling which is his understanding of the human situation. That import is readily understandable for the sensitive listener, though he may never have heard Cajun French or even a folk song in his life.

Discursive symbolization is significant by virtue of the eternal objects' relevance to the prehending society at some point in the past. The objectifications are simply tools -conveniences with which to manipulate the possibilities. The nexūs called discursive symbols have meaning because the relations of possibility and actualization are agreed upon. This is not the case with presentational symbolization. To alter the nexus is to alter the reverted feelings, and thus, the import.

The creation of art may then be understood as the conscious arrangement of embodied eternal objects of human feeling in such a way that the resulting physical society is formally congruent with the embodied eternal objects in their extension.

It is clear that a given art symbol will be prehended as simple causality by most occasions, dominated as they are by causal efficacy. Lower animal forms willprehend it signally, as will some humans. Artistic import arises only in the process of the percipient occasion's concrescence, and then only when certain functional prerequisites are met, -one of them being consciousness. This is the theme of the section which follows.

### THE STATUS OF ILLUSION IN CONCRESCENCE

Much has been said above of the virtual character of artistic import. It is the purpose of this section to show how this may be justified within the philosophy of organism, wherein all things must satisfy the Ontological Principle. Our question becomes, Can artistic illusion find its "reason" in actual entities? It is the thesis of this section that artistic illusion arises in the final steps of concrescence, where the proposition is set in creative contrast with the datum of the raw physical feeling. Thus it may be viewed as a product of the originaive function of concrescence.

A distinction will be seen here between this view and that supported by Donald W. Sherburne in his A Whiteheadian Aesthetic. He holds that the aesthetic object enjoys the ontological status of the proposition, which, as an impure possibility, accounts for the phenomenon of aesthetic distance.<sup>12</sup> That is, it is not actual, and is thus somehow removed from direct perception.

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<sup>12</sup>Donald W. Sherburne, A Whiteheadian Aesthetic (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 107 f..

Sherburne accounts for the perceptibility and the "non-actual-its" of art objects by assigning both functions to the objectified proposition. Thus, both "what is" and "what might be" have the same status -as impure possibility. It is the "lure for feeling," functioning as the source of novelty for the subject's concrescence. Something has appeared that was not, in fact, previously immanent. Actuality is then only derived -or imputed, in the case of "absolute" art.

Moreover, Sherburne maintains that an ideal form of each art work/proposition stands as possibility. This ideal performance, using Sherburne's metaphor, is the top of a "hillock" which each objectification (performance) tries to attain. Some performances rise higher than do others, so we have varying qualities of performance.

It is suggested in the present paper that the "art object" or "art symbol" is no proposition, but rather a society of objectively immortal occasions. It is fully actual, with nothing of the proposition's tentative status. That which does obtain as a proposition is the set of tendencies, tension and release, the form of which, in the case of music, the composer has approximated on paper.

In illustration, let us look again at Franz Schubert's "Der Neugierige" (pages 38-40). A set of impure possibilities has been made available by Schubert as a pattern for the creation of a work of art. He has hinted at its form in his manuscript, which presents a blueprint for the art symbol. The song comes into being only in the temporal span, occupied by the singing and playing, which we call "musical performance." For only in an audible event are these possibilities of semblance available for prehension. The symbol is the event of performance, an occurrence in time. "Music's audible character is its

entire being," as Langer would remind us. In sculpture, the art object is the plastic shape which greets our eyes; in music, it is the audible symbol.

The music may or may not be perceived aesthetically. The performing musician has an immense responsibility to create an art symbol that is consistent with the conception which the composer has helped him to understand, but for the large part aesthetic perception is contingent on the way in which novel configurations are prehended by the listener. The paragraphs that follow support these observations.

As the becoming occasion prehends its actual world and through transmutation feels it as including a certain society -the art symbol-, eternal objects held in common by the occasions of that society are drawn into contrast with the datum of the original physical feeling. The feeling that results is a propositional one -the contrast of "what is" with "what might have been."<sup>13</sup> In certain instances, the proposition is prized in its character as possibility. It is the "lure for feeling," functioning as the source of novelty for the subject's concrescence. Something has appeared that was not previously immanent.

In a propositional feeling [writes Whitehead] there is the "hold up" -or, in its original sense, the epoch- of the valuation of the predicative pattern in its relevance to the definite logical subjects which are otherwise felt as definite elements in experience. There is the arrest of the emotional pattern round this sheer fact as a possibility, with the corresponding gain in distinctness of its relevance to the future. The particular possibility for the transcendent creativity- this particular possibility has been picked out, held up, and clothed with emotion.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>That is, for this occasion. The possibility lost its absolute generality at conceptual valuation. It then becomes a "predicative pattern" for this particular subject.

<sup>14</sup>Whitehead, Process and Reality, pp. 427-428.

Depending upon the type of proposition, one of two things may happen in the prehension of it. A "conformal" proposition introduces patterns of possibility into concrescence which conform to the real world. They are "true." "The reaction to the datum has simply resulted in the conformation of feeling to fact; . . . The prehension of the proposition has abruptly emphasized one form of definition illustrated in fact."<sup>15</sup>

However, when a non-conformal proposition is admitted into feeling;

The reaction to the datum has resulted in the syntheses of fact with the alternative potentiality of the complex predicate. A novelty has emerged into creation. The novelty may promote or destroy order; it may be good or bad. But it is new, a new type of individual, and not merely a new intensity of individual feeling. That member of the locus has introduced a new form into the actual world; or at least, an old form in a new function.<sup>16</sup>

Here we are reminded of Whitehead's famous remark, "In the real world it is more important that a proposition be interesting than that it be true. The importance of truth is, that it adds to interest."<sup>17</sup> His example is that of an art symbol; Hamlet's soliloquy. The true nature of a proposition is revealed here in that even a logician will appreciate the speech without first needing to judge whether the initial "to be, or not to be: That is the question" is true or false. "The speech, for the theatre audience, is purely theoretical, a mere lure for feeling."<sup>18</sup>

In the non-conformal proposition we have a new configuration of fact and fancy, dominated by fancy. The proposition has maintained its

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 284.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 395-396.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

status as possibility through the early conceptual stages by virtue of its novelty. As a result, it remains a lure for feeling at the point of consciousness. The enhanced status of the eternal object as a lure for feeling is the locus of artistic illusion. The "what might have been" gains more influence upon the shape of eventual satisfaction than the "what is."

These new forms are then contributions of the perceiving occasion, arising from its feelings of possibilities for future contrast by virtue of congruent feelings within its physical inheritance. The novelty, induced by the physical feeling of the art object, has "merged into creation." The non-conformal proposition is largely the contribution of the percipient; always relevant to, but decidedly different from, the originaive feeling. The degree to which the perceiving dominant occasion entertains these new realities as lures for still other feelings is the degree to which that person may be said to be "perceiving aesthetically."

This, then, is the basis of artistic illusion -the "reason" for import. The art object, prehended by the physical pole, is felt in terms of certain embodied eternal objects, which lead through reversion to the prehension of "alternative potentialities" for the becoming occasion. These possibilities survive several contrasts with pure physical data, and are drawn finally into the last stages of concrecence, still retaining their virtual nature. They are felt as efficacious because of their interesting character, their formal congruence with significant contrasts in its physical inheritance, and their capacity as lures for new feeling.

### THE PREHENSION OF IMPORT

In order that the virtual lures for feeling derived from the art object be finally efficacious for satisfaction, they must be positively prehended in the final integrative contrast, where "pure theory" meets "pure fact." This is the point at which the experience becomes an aesthetic one or not, and here the degree of influence exercised by novelty is determined. This is the genesis of artistic import. Here the virtual creation is contrasted not only with the artistic symbol physically felt, but also with other significant feelings of nexūs from the past. Here, at the affirmation-negation contrast, which is the seat of consciousness, virtual data encounter their actual counterparts. Here, too, perceptions of the art object in the mode of causal efficacy are drawn into contrast with immediate perceptions of the becoming occasion's extensive locus.

In the experience we term "aesthetic," the occasion holds the derived conceptual feelings as more efficacious for its final satisfaction than its physical ones. It has done so on the basis of the formal congruence of those virtual feelings with nexūs from its serial past felt by hybrid physical feelings as having led to intensity in that past, and because the issue of the earlier contrasts of these physical and conceptual data has been the retention of possibility in its pure form and thus the emergence of a "new creation."

So, for example, the illusion of music -virtual passage- is more important for the perceiving occasion than are the physical attributes of the tonal symbol. At times, it can capture one's subjective aim.

"Sometimes," says Langer, "in the presence of great art, attention to the actual environment is hard to sustain."<sup>19</sup> When music is perceived aesthetically, the new creation, virtual time, is more efficacious for intensity than is the pure physical fact of sounds in time. In the non-aesthetic experience of music, on the other hand, the virtual possibilities are valued down, so that the sounds are felt simply as sounds (e.g. background music), or at most as tones corresponding with moods and emotions. They are felt as efficacious by virtue of their physical qualities alone. Propositions, if they arise, are conformal.

A performance of "Der Neugierige," then, could be prehended as nothing more than pleasant sound, or, perhaps, poor singing. When it is perceived aesthetically, however, new possibilities for feeling-experience are introduced. For the shape of time as it is felt is "the pattern of life as it is felt and directly known."<sup>20</sup> The novel potentialities are those of experiencing a realm of feeling normally beyond everyday individual experience. By holding up for prehension the shape of experienced passage in its most general form, music presents for our contemplation a conception of the temporal shape of human experience; "the pattern of life itself."<sup>21</sup> This stretching of our feeling conceptuality deepens our humanity and our understanding of who we are. Musical performance contributes, event by event, to an enlargement of insight and an enrichment of feeling-life, thereby helping us to better understand what it means to be human.

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<sup>19</sup> Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 84.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



Especially notable within the aesthetic experience is the check on the originative functions of the entity in the final contrast with the datum of the physical feeling. This prevents the stampede of novelty leading to chaos which may occur, for instance, when bodily fatigue or drugs allow perception in the mode of presentational immediacy to be felt with little significant relationship with corresponding causal perceptions, and preserves the integrated feeling of the virtual qualities as being related to the nexūs physically felt. Any explanation of the aesthetic experience must account for the phenomenon in which whatever is felt -beauty, illusion, and so forth- is felt as an attribute of the art symbol. This is accomplished in organic philosophy by the description of the final integrative contrast.

The aesthetic experience, growing as it does from the final contrast, must be a conscious one. While consciousness does not always occur -or at least, it may "flicker" on and off in certain organisms- when it does emerge, it does so as the result of the survival of novelty as such beyond the stage of the propositional feeling. The same must be said of aesthetic experience. It demands similar prerequisites for emergence.

But most animals' dominant occasions may be said to enjoy consciousness, while only human ones are believed to have aesthetic experiences. We have seen that the distinguishing characteristic of the human personality is its symbolic aptitude and drive. Given the progress to the final stage of concrescence, the human occasion is distinguished by its relation of the formal qualities of its immediate perceptions to certain nexūs in its past, and its prehension, through transmutation, of nexūs of physical occasions that correspond with those perceptions,

thereby making them perceptible to future occasions. Throughout the serial history of the living human person, final satisfactions have conformed with the shape of the derived novelty. Because of its causal influence over all the future occasions of the body, the dominant occasion is able to make its influence felt as those occasions concreate. The result is the actualization by occasions of the mouth, hands, etc., of the possibilities felt conceptually in the history of the dominant occasion. The evolutionary process coupling consciousness with an emerging society capable of actualizing -making perceptible- the "new things" first prehended conceptually by the dominant occasion, has resulted in the unique species called human.

To summarize: The creator of the structured society (e.g. a musical melody) has embodied certain patterns of eternal objects in such a way that the shape of the society is formally congruent with that of the pattern of possibilities. The becoming occasion feels the entire society in terms of those embodied possibilities (a in Figure 3). From these conformal feelings are derived conceptual feelings of those eternal objects as actualized in the datum occasion (b). This conceptual valuation leads to conceptual reversion (b') in which related eternal objects are felt as having efficacy as possibility for new feelings within the occasion. Of course, other elements of the physical inheritance are drawn into consideration here, including all other physical prehensions (some hybrid) and their attendant conceptual feelings.

In the aesthetic experience, the hybrid prehension of certain conceptual feelings of the past are contrasted with the emerging origination. The resulting prehension of formal congruence contributes to

the decision to value the novelty up for final integration. y is thus the proposition that this novelty has possibility for intensity by virtue of its being congruent with significant elements in the past. The corresponding propositional feeling retains the novel feelings as novel, and, at the affirmation-negation contrast (z), these feelings are felt by the emerging conscious entity as virtual but efficacious. As satisfaction is achieved by the bringing of the new entity into contrast with the actual one, the former is felt as having the greatest influence on the occasion's being. The virtual is accepted as "real," and in the emergence of subject into object, the virtual becomes actual.

On the basis of this understanding of the aesthetic event, the following chapter will explore the musical experience.

PART III

EXPLORATIONS IN MUSICAL AESTHETICS

## Chapter 7

### THE STATUS OF MUSICAL EXPERIENCE

The discussions of Chapter 4 attempted to show that "time" represents a major value for organic philosophy, enjoying a status not far removed from creativity -the "universal of universals." This creative advance to immediacy is not actual; rather, it is a principle -an abstraction derived from the world of actual occasions. It is an abstraction expressing the nature of things, and it does not exist apart from those things.

It is the thesis of this chapter that the power of musical symbolism lies in its expression of "felt" time. Mrs. Langer declares that there are whole realms of feeling inaccessible to language, and that the expression of those feelings is central to what it means to be human. Moreover, she points to music as the most abstract, and thus, most direct form of this symbolic expression. In her words, music creates a "purely apparent flow of life existing only in time."<sup>1</sup> Bruno Walter calls it "a parable of creation itself, ruled by the logos."<sup>2</sup>

Neither description imputes actuality to music's import. By the careful use of "purely apparent," "feeling," etc., the illusory nature of musical symbolism is preserved. Whatever music is, its

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<sup>1</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 148.

<sup>2</sup>Bruno Walter, Of Music and Music-Making (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 19, emphasis mine.

ontological status is commensurate with creative advance or the extensive continuum. Arising from the nature of things, and inexpressible apart from the stuff of actuality, still music is not actual. It is, rather, an abstract expression, and what it presents is the semblance of creative advance.

#### THE TONAL SOCIETY AND SYMBOLIC FUNCTION

A musical tone is produced by a vibrating substance which disturbs the surrounding air molecules in correspondingly even patterns. This vibratory impulse is passed on through solid, gaseous, and liquid substances until it reaches the perceiver's eardrum. That eardrum and all of the related apparatus of the inner ear vibrate in response, and the sensation which reaches the corresponding nerve center in the brain is called a "sound." Because its vibration is relatively regular, there is a unity about it which leads the hearer to perceive it as a single entity. The tonal occasions are transmuted by the becoming occasion and perceived as a single nexus by virtue of the eternal objects, e.g. dynamic level, harmonic series, and so on, which the occasions of that nexus have actualized.

But more exactly, the musical tone is a "structured society." Not only does it exhibit the common elements of form and positive prehension which characterize all societies, it is also a complex organization, "a patterned intertwining of various nexūs with markedly diverse defining characteristics."<sup>3</sup> This is Whitehead's description of the

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<sup>3</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper & Row, 1929), p. 157.

structured society. The distinctive aspect of this specialized form is the presence within it of regnant nexūs and subordinate ones.

In the musical event, each occasion in the spatio-temporal series between the vibrating object and the occasion contiguous with the perceiving dominant occasion has felt this preceding structured society in a distinctive way, taking account of the way in which the previous occasions have achieved satisfaction. Thus the dominant occasion's physical inheritance includes the various contributions of the mediating occasions. It follows that the musical tone as it is perceived is not simply the result of certain actualizations at the point of origin. All mediating occasions, whether they be part of the surrounding nexūs called walls, air, chairs, or the body of the percipient, affect the inheritance of the tonal society.

As is the case in all concrescence, that which presents itself for feeling by the perceiver's dominant occasion is a vast number of occasions having achieved objective immortality. This is its inheritance, prehended initially only by the physical pole. Through the agency of transmutation, the society is felt to exhibit certain common actualizations, and the data of those past actualizations are now felt conceptually as pure possibilities. For example, the eternal objects actualized by nexūs whose attributes are lushness or shrillness are felt as pure possibilities "lushness" and "shrillness."

As concrescence continues, the prehending occasion makes certain judgments on the value of these attributes to its own satisfaction. For the moment, it suffices to note that it has now felt the tonal data both physically and conceptually, and has transmuted prehensions allowing it to deal with great quantities of past occasions in terms of the rela-

tively few eternal objects they share.

In the case of the musical tone, the regnant nexūs will be characterized by their common objectification of the possibilities exhibited for actualization which are distinctive to certain instruments; -for instance, the peculiar structuring of harmonic series produced by a violin string's vibrations. While the society will include the subordinate nexūs found in all musical tones -pitch, dynamic level, physical motion, and so forth, it will be characterized by its peculiar ordering of these sub-societies. The regnant occasions of the musical tone prehend positively, among other things, those attributes of the vibrating physical inheritance which happen to fall within the wave spectrum perceptible to the human ear.

In all sign function, signal or symbolic, nexūs are felt as representing other nexūs. In the process Langer calls signal function, nexūs are felt largely as physical inheritance. The tone carries with it no more information than that a violin string is vibrating. However, when those nexūs which are prehended suggest purely conceptual nexūs, symbolization is involved.

In the chapter entitled "The Status of Aesthetic Experience," it was shown how artistic illusion becomes a formative factor in an occasion's process. Obviously, certain objects lend themselves more readily to aesthetic perception than do others, and this quality depends on physical characteristics. Whatever novelty a becoming occasion derives is grounded in fact. In an integrated formal structure there is no guarantee that an aesthetic experience will result from its perception, but, on the other hand, the illusions of music are intimately related to the formal relationships exhibited by the tones themselves.




Accordingly, our treatment of the musical experience will have two sections; (1) a description of music's formal relationship with time, and (2) a technical discussion on the emergence of virtual passage as a causal element within an occasion's aesthetic experience.

### MUSICAL PASSAGE AND MUSICAL FORM

Once the composer has done his best to translate the commanding form of his conception into performable symbols, the task lies with the performer to make those symbols audible. An extended description of his responsibilities constitutes the closing chapter of this paper, following a discussion of the work performed. The present section suggests how musical symbols function so as to evoke virtual passage.

Basic to our discussion from the earliest stages has been the view that musical passage must correspond in some form with felt passage. It distressed Bergson that the common conception of time is more concerned with the positions of an arrow in flight at the several intervals of clock time than with the arrow's flight itself. Two distinct components are at odds here, and it is in the imbalance of the two that so much misunderstanding arises as to the nature of time.

In the realm of music, a similar confusion occurs for much the same reason. Music is created out of tonal entities, each of which holds certain characteristics; each of which occupies a distinct period of clock time. These several entities are perceptible and analyzable. The tone commonly designated by the symbol  $\text{♩}=60$   may be quite exactly described as a sound of two seconds' duration, resulting from the vibration of a solid object or air column at the rate of 440 vibrations per second.

A more complete analysis of the tone must take into consideration the agent which produces that tone. The difference between an A440 sounded for two seconds on a violin may be distinguished from the same tone played upon a clarinet by describing the overtone series peculiar to each instrument. These varying qualities have from time to time been thought to be the source of music's power and charm. Adjective terms such as the "seductive" violin or the "noble" trumpet reflect supposed attributes stemming from this identification of music's import with the source of the vibrations. The "blend" resulting from the playing together of instrumental "families" (string quartets, brass ensembles) exploits one result of harmonic action, while the rich sound of a full orchestra emerges as the many instrumental colors combine, creating whole new harmonic colors.

Studies of the effect of sound's physical attributes abound, some of them self-styled as musical aesthetics.<sup>4</sup> That these physical elements are so readily available for analysis is a large part of the reason for their serious study, but we have been warned by Bergson and Sartre that to do so is to squeeze the life out of the art. To stop the music is to change the subject. No longer music, but physics, is the subject of such studies. For most persons, "studying music" is not at all what is needed. A large repertoire of melodies and harmony acquired from recordings has left more than one student ignorant of the essence of music, which is its flow. The chief mistake is the confusion

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<sup>4</sup>See Derycke Cooke, The Language of Music (London: Oxford University Press, 1959); E.M. Pallet, "Music Communications Research: The Connotative Dimensions of Music Meaning," Dissertation Abstracts, XXX (1969), 1585A.

of musical form with the elements of musical structure. "Form and Composition" becomes the study of harmonic skeletons, defined through identifying and analyzing the microcosmic elements which comprise each temporal interval.

In contrast, Langer has shown that "musical form" has to do with the succession, not the units, of musical time. As symbol, it displays a logical relation with its import by virtue of the internal relationships among its own parts. Musical form becomes evident in the way a composition's several elements relate to one another as they are articulated in time. "[Music's] sonorous forms move in relation to each other -always and only to each other, for nothing else exists there."<sup>5</sup>

In committing his conception to paper, the composer expresses in purely spatial terms the relations of part to whole that characterize that form. It is his way of indicating the trajectory of the musical passage. The importance of his using a "ii<sub>6</sub>" chord, for instance, is, first, in the internal relationships among the notes, and secondly, in the way a creator can use it to enrich the performer's capacity to direct his auditory production in a shape that more or less corresponds with the matrix. Whether a composer uses a certain technical device such as the ii<sub>6</sub> chord or serial writing is not important. What matters is whether that device serves the re-articulation of the commanding form which his conception has assumed.

In the musical example which follows (Figure 4, page 97), we have a map for the successful passage through a musical event, unfettered by the complicating (but often enriching) factors of harmony,

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<sup>5</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 109.

Figure 4

Lord, . . . . . have mer - cy up - on . . . us. . .

Lord, have mer - cy up - on . . . us. . Lord, . . . . .

. . have mer - cy up - on . . . us. Christ, have mer - cy

up - on . . us. Christ . . . . . have mer - cy

up - on . . . us. Christ, have mer - cy up - on . . . us.

Lord, . . . . . have mer - cy up - on . . . us.

Lord, . . . . . have mer - cy up - on . . . . .

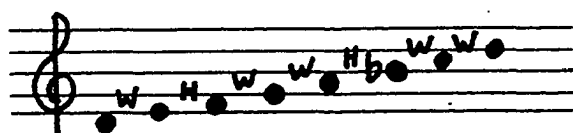
us . . Lord, . . . . .

. . . . .

. . . . . have mer - cy up - on . . . us . . . . .

polyphony, or multiple rhythms. This Kyrie eleison, dating from the twelfth century at the latest, is probably not a single composer's work, but rather the result of a great corporate effort to find a suitable expression for the immense depths of feeling represented in the ancient liturgical prayer. This manuscript copy demonstrates for us the shape of the flux, the relationship of part to whole, of emphasis to flight, the varying durations of the embodied feelings, etc., which give shape to both the physical articulation and the virtual image of the music.

The passage is given a spatial status at the sounding of the first phrase. The intervallic relationships correspond with our modern set of tones called the "d minor scale;"



W=whole tone

H=half tone

This is the Kyrie's standpoint, and the process builds upon it as it moves through time. Bergson's description of duration (above, p. 11) is an apt one for the action of this musical passage as well. The crescendo of feeling, accomplished by the melody largely independently of the text, is just such a "continuous progress of the past, gnawing into the future." The "advancing swell" could have no better exemplification than in the power of the "Kyrie"'s return following the "Christe eleison." While structurally it is based on the initial statement, it has reached a high level of development in both melodic and expressive intensity by the time it returns. And that intensity derives not from any change in the musical phrase itself, but rather from its temporal relation to the rest of the symbol's components.

Bergson could not envision a symbolic rendering of la durée

pure. But accepting Langer's view of signal and symbol function, we can see that in this Kyrie we may well have a perceptible form which presents for our intuitive apprehension the form of duration in a particularly transparent way. To be sure, the true import of this symbol is "felt as a quality" rather than logically deduced from physical parallels. Certainly it is more clearly evident in a plainsong than, perhaps, in a Lied, that the flux -the flow of sound- is the source of import. That flux is the musical form, shaped and guided by the accidents of notation and musical theory. "The being and element of true music," wrote Basil de Selincourt, "is surely just its course, its onward flow."<sup>6</sup>

But pure continuity is not enough. While audible time may well approximate la durée pure and thus be closely related to the "absolute," it is in its clearer relation to "experienced time" that music grips the human heart. The key to this concept is suggested to us by Whitehead's view of temporal order; specifically, the notion of supercession as the key to understanding time as epochal. To repeat;

Supercession cannot be regarded as the continuous unfolding of a continuum. I express this conclusion by the statement that time is epochal. The occasion B which acquires concretion so as to supercede A embodies a definite quantum of time which I call the epochal character of the concrescence.<sup>7</sup>

The understanding of time as a "becoming of continuity" com-

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<sup>6</sup>Basil de Selincourt, "Music and Duration," Music and Letters I:4 (1920), 292.

<sup>7</sup>Alfred North Whitehead, "Time," Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy (New York: Longmans, Green, 1927): Quoted in William Christian, An Interpretation of Whitehead's Metaphysics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 71. See also above, p. 62, note 25.

prised of distinct spatio-temporal epochs opens new horizons for an understanding of the nature of the musical experience. For the essence of that experience is a becoming of continuity made actual in spatio-temporal epochs whose strongest attributes are those of audibility.<sup>8</sup> The buds and droplets must pass. Langer's "semblance of organic movement" expresses for our perception the principle of creativity -the universal of universals. The becoming of an occasion constitutes its being; supercession expresses both the being and the efficacy of the occasion. It dies in order to have influence. Its efficacy is in its role in the future as an objectively immortal entity. Similarly, to attempt to grasp a musical note in its immediacy is to destroy its efficacy. "I must accept their death; Yes, I must cherish it." (Sartre)

This transition [from particular instant to particular existent] . . . is the "perpetually perishing" which is one aspect of the notion of time; and in another aspect the transition is the origination of the present in conformity with the "power" of the past.<sup>9</sup>

The integrity of a piece of music is contingent on its conformity with this description of time. That the sounds of a musical performance are "perpetually perishing" is painfully evident to the artist, yet it is precisely in that perishing that the tonal entities

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<sup>8</sup>F. David Martin's "The Power of Music and Whitehead's Theory of Perception" is based on a similar view of the musical occasion. Through the mixed mode of symbolic reference, he says, "the feeling of causal efficacy, the compulsion of process, may be more or less insistent. It is my hypothesis that more than any art music makes us feel this compulsion because (1) the meaning of music's percepta or tones are completely embodied and (2) the tones are presented successively." "The Power of Music and Whitehead's Theory of Perception," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XXV:3 (1967), 318.

<sup>9</sup>Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 320. The quotation marks within the citation indicate the points at which Whitehead is using Locke's terminology.

achieve efficacy. In their perceptibility they contribute to the musical illusion, while as they fade from hearing they become efficacious for the future which "swells as it advances." A composition "makes sense" when its several elements in fact conform at once to the past and to the future. Each note, chord, rest, and expressive element stands in a reciprocal, efficacious relationship with all the other elements. The work swells as it advances, full of import as it processes, incomplete until the final element is actualized; yet when it is complete, it exists no longer.

The loss of immediacy is one of the most striking attributes music shares with time itself. It certainly is an important reason for the depth of emotional involvement which time-bound humans feel for the art. This audible reinforcement of an existential terror, delightful though its surface might be, grips the sensitive listener with the truth illustrated so unceasingly for him in the sheer ongoingness of the music.

#### MUSICAL OCCASIONS.

But music cannot claim the loss of immediacy as an exclusive attribute. All occurrent arts share it. The peculiar illusions of poetry and theater are also created within time; -they "take time" to become themselves, and they, too, are complete only when they have ceased to take time.

Langer has pointed out (Philosophy in a New Key, Chapter 8) that music's abstract elements are the key to its universality and its capacity to articulate concepts inaccessible to language. This abstract nature is an important factor in the significance of music. The ingredients of the art are sounds, created for no other purpose than their



own existence. Unlike words, which are the building blocks of theater and poetry, musical sounds have no syntax -they are neither representational nor do they have assigned meaning. They are symbols which express import solely by virtue of their formal relationships with other occurrent elements. Music "exhibits pure form not as an embellishment," writes Langer, "but as its very essence."<sup>10</sup>

These audible elements, then, with no significance other than their function within the larger symbol, are remarkable entities. Musical tones, as we have seen, are epochal, and they exhibit for our perception the being and fate of each moment of our temporal existence.

It is not too surprising, then, that Whitehead's words concerning the general character of the actual entity can be applied directly to the musical note: "An actual entity is to be conceived both as a subject presiding over its own immediacy of becoming, and a superject which is the atomic creature exercising its function of objective immortality."<sup>11</sup> That is, the musical tone, as it sounds (becomes), involves in a process of integration all of the musical elements that have gone before, and this is accomplished in a way that is compatible with the future. Because the import of the musical expressive form derives from the relationships of parts within that form, individual units influence no relationship, whether in the past or the future, that is not important. Again;

The process itself is the constitution of the actual entity; in Locke's phrase, it is the "real internal constitution" of the actual

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<sup>10</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1951), p. 178.

<sup>11</sup>Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 71.

entity. In the old phraseology employed by Descartes, the process is what the actual entity is in itself, "formaliter."<sup>12</sup>

The sounding of a note is what that note is. The musical rest is a rest by virtue of the temporal space it occupies; that is, its extensive relations with all other ingredients. Musical elements are causa sui.

Not only do musical elements exhibit perpetual perishing and express their being in their becoming; they also make extensive locus perceptible. In its becoming, this element (free of referential meaning) expresses nothing more nor less than its spatio-temporal niche. Its essence is how it actualizes the extensive continuum -its place in time and space. It presents itself to us as perceptible locus.

We have suggested that the import of the larger symbol emerges from the extensive relations among the elements. -The significance of the first eighth rest in "Der Neugierige"'s first measure lies in the spatio-temporal relations that are defined, in performance, between its own actualized locus and those of all other elements; -most immediately the eighth note which precedes and the sixteenth which follows, but it stands in effective relationship with every other single element. A small change here would affect the formal pattern and would thus change the "meaning" of the final chord. The song as a whole would assume a slightly different character.

The symbolization involved here is presentational. Music functions not by assigning certain relationships to represent external relations, whether they be programmatic or metaphysical. This would be

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

discursive symbolism. Rather, it functions in subjective harmony, with no purpose other than to maintain integrity. The external parallels with metaphysical facts being argued in this paper point simply to reasons (as distinguished from causes) for musical power.

These parallels are the ontological bases for the truth of Bruno Walter's observations cited in this paper's Introduction. Music's presentation of the shape of becoming is what he means by the "parable of creation." Whitehead's use of a similar word, "creativity" and "creative advance" to express the "universal of universals" points to a closeness of thought in their writings. The sounding of music portrays for our contemplation the way in which;

The oneness of the universe, and the oneness of each element in the universe, repeat themselves to the crack of doom in the creative advance from creature to creature, each creature including in itself the whole of history and exemplifying the self-identity of things and their mutual diversities.<sup>13</sup>

That these metaphysical facts are close to the stuff of religion was observed by Walter, and we may certainly affirm it here. The principle of creativity -la durée pure- is at the heart of existence, whether it be human or otherwise. That music presents to us a "parable" of that creation is the testimony of the ages, -the reason for its recognition by generations as being "commensurate with religion."

Through structural parallels, we have tried to show the formal congruence of music and its ingredients with time and its elements. In support of the contention that part of music's peculiar power consists in this congruence, we have compared musical passage with the "ultimate"

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 347-348; cited above, p. 61.

Principle of Creativity, or flux; the fact of supercession has been seen to be common to both temporal and musical process; and the elements of musical symbolization have been observed to express, tangibly and presentationally, the metaphysical nature of "the final real things of which the world is made up,"<sup>14</sup> -the actual occasion.

#### VIRTUAL PASSAGE IN CONCRESCENCE

The recognition of a formal congruence between passage and tonal music fulfills but the initial requirement for a complete technical analysis of the musical experience. That experience is, to be sure, grounded in the physical facts of life -that is, the tonal entities themselves. But how does music's special illusion -virtual passage- enter into experience and become actual?

We have seen that, in a limited sense, we may speak of an "art object." It is the created nexus which is formally congruent with the embodied eternal objects. (See above, p. 78) In the case of music, the datum nexus is aural, and the pattern of eternal objects is that arrangement of tendencies and tensions which Langer calls the "commanding form." In this matrix the composer recognizes the shape of his central idea;

In this [matrix] lie all the motives for the specific work; not all the themes -a theme may be imported if it fits the place- but the tendencies of the piece, the need for dissonance and consonance, novelty and reiteration, length of phrase and timing of cadences. . . . These general functions are demanded by the organic form itself.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>15</sup>Langer, Feeling and Form, p. 123.

This matrix is the "greatest movement" of the piece. It is the essential style of passage that characterizes the idea. Only is a vague sense, if at all, may the commanding form as it first presents itself to the composer's imagination be termed a pattern of eternal objects. Such a pattern is only possible in actuality -in a nexus of objectively immortal occasions. Thus the existence of a particular set of possibilities called the "composition" is only available for conception through an event of tonalization in the past (performance), or, at least, an imagined tonalization.<sup>16</sup>

The tonal nexus is a structured society, and that structure is based upon logical patterns formally related to the patterns exhibited by the process of time. The becoming dominant occasion feels that nexus as having congruence with significant nexūs prehended positively at some point in the history of the serial order of dominant occasions to which it is successor. In the musical experience, those nexūs are the forms of felt process -the "flow of life existing only in time." The subjective aim of the conerescing occasion is significance of that form for intensity in the present, based on its hybrid physical feelings of conceptual ones (i.e., the composer's prehension of novelty, called the "commanding form" by Langer).

If the experience is not an aesthetic one, the tonal patterns are felt as nothing more than sounds arranged in more or less attractive relations. In the aesthetic (in this case, musical) experience, the prehension is a transmuted one in which the nexus is felt not in terms

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<sup>16</sup>See Ibid., pp. 134-140 for a complete discussion of the differences between mental and aural hearing.

of its physical properties but in terms of embodied conceptual feelings. It is in its function as a presentational symbol that this close relation of physical and illusory shape is possible. Its form is its function, and the becoming occasion feels it as such.

In the course of the supplemental phases (see Chapter 6, first section), the simple physical feeling of the tonal nexus gives rise to a reverted conceptual feeling whose logical subject is the possibility of congruence with the forms of passage presented by hybrids feelings of its serial past. The subjective form of the subsequent proposition is toward the upward valuation of this possibility, leading as it might to greater intensity of feeling through preserving novelty. Thus the becoming occasion prehends both primary and reverted feelings as having positive graded relevance for its satisfaction. This is a conscious process because the relevance derives from the feeling of the transmuted eternal object as serving as a lure to intensity only by virtue of its actualization. The import derives from the embodied status of the eternal object. This is the nature of presentational symbolism, which, again, is available only to conscious entities with the capacity to conceptualize.

We have looked at Langer's summary of the human distinctive -the power of symbolization- and here we find the metaphysical basis for this suggestion. As the human occasion prehends nexus in terms of transmuted hybrid feelings, the embodied concepts far outweigh physical facts in relevance to the dominant occasion's concrescence. Both physical and conceptual data are available, but the prehending human occasion may choose which pole will determine the subjective form of its concrescence. Therein lies the difference.

So, as the tonal nexus is felt in terms of the illusion of movement presented by the tones moving in clock time, this import is felt in creative contrast with the subject's hybrid prehension (from its serial past) of felt passage. Now the novel proposition of a congruence between the two is presented for contrast through the simple comparative feeling (the affirmation-negation contrast).

At this point, the proposed integration of the musical prehension with that of felt passage is felt in contrast with the simple physical data -the sounds. Because it is an aesthetic experience, the occasion values up the originaive feelings, thereby reducing the significance of the simple physical facts of vibrating bodies. Something has arisen within the concrescence, grounded in the simple conformal feelings, yet much more than those feelings.

This novel proposition is of the sort Whitehead calls "non-conformal" (See above discussion, p. 82). Not only has pure possibility been held in contrast with physical fact; some aspect of that possibility has been introduced into creation, and it becomes a lure for further feelings within the concrescence without losing its character as possibility. The novelty is enjoyed on its own terms.

In music, this non-conformal proposition brings to the subject the possibility that the physical structure of the tonal shape physically felt is more significant to final satisfaction by virtue of its semblance of felt time's shape (reverted conceptual feeling) having formal congruence with the shape of felt process in its past than by virtue of its simple physical qualities.

When the occasion perceives musically, that proposition dominates the satisfaction. At the affirmation-negation contrast, the

novelty of semblance is brought into full relevance, and the datum nexus is felt in terms of the novelty (the illusion) which its prehension has induced within the concurring occasion. Virtual passage has become more important than scientific time. When the musical nexus thus takes over the temporal life of the perceiver as long as it endures, the experience is indeed a musical one.



## Chapter 8

### AN AESTHETIC OF MUSIC PERFORMANCE

For the most part, aestheticians' energies have been given over to the study of graphic and plastic arts, while the immense realm of music lies largely unexplored. And if one were to compile a bibliography of works devoted to the nature of music performance, one or two note cards would suffice. Formal matters and principles of appreciation have been investigated, but one of the most important elements of the musical event -its very production- has remained an unexamined assumption. This final thesis chapter is an attempt to begin such an examination, as an outgrowth of the assumptions and assertions which have filled the foregoing pages.

Assuming the illusory nature of his art's import, what control has the performer over the issue of his work? How much control should he have? Since so much of the import of the aesthetic experience lies in the way in which it is perceived, what more does the performer do than simply make the tonal symbol available to the listener? Why not use a recording instead?

These and similar questions are aspects of our central problem, -What is the performer of music doing? We shall approach this question two ways; 1) a description of the performer's role, and 2) a statement, based on the aesthetic developed in this paper, of the meaning of the musical event for the persons involved.

## THE ROLE OF THE PERFORMER

Performance is the reenactment of the art symbol nexūs for the purpose of presenting their embodied import again for prehension and for eventual contribution to intensity. Because of the possibilities of significance understood either from previous performances or purely spatial representations on paper, the performer's dominant society of occasions -the mind- feels through hybrid prehension that art object in terms of its eternal objects, and purposes to re-present them in the contemporary world. It is the performer's role to embody those possibilities in perceptible nexūs of occasions.

This configuration of possibilities of tension, emphasis, and duration making up the matrix is prehended by the performer's dominant occasion as a lure for the emergence of novelty within its own concrescence. Depending on the composer's success in symbolizing his original conception, that matrix is a more or less integrated configuration, with more or less obvious possibilities for actualization. To some extent, the commanding form dominates the subjective aim of the performer's becoming, the degree of successful performance roughly paralleling the degree to which the work's commanding form dictates the performer's subjective form.

The essential novelty of a feeling attaches to its subjective form [writes Whitehead]. The initial data, and even the nexus which is the objective datum, may have served other feelings with other subjects. But the subjective form is the immediate novelty; it is how that subject is feeling that objective datum. There is no tearing this subjective form from the novelty of this concrescence. It is enveloped in the immediacy of its immediate present. The fundamental example of the notion "quality inhering [in] particular substance" is afforded by "subjective form inhering in feeling." If we abstract the form from the feeling, we are left with an eter-

nal object as the remnant of subjective form.<sup>1</sup>

In the creation and subsequent performances of art symbols, we encounter the survival of just such remnants. The initial form is that of the matrix, -a conceptually novel prehension of the formal possibilities of some aspect of human feeling, which as eternal object rules the subjective form of the composer's creative moments. In "composing" the perceptible elements available to his art he tries to approximate the form of that feeling. This "abstraction of form from feeling" is the creative act. The finished composition remains as objective datum, available for perception as a lure to further intensity through representation.

Thus, the nexus which presents itself to the performer has in fact "served other feelings with other subjects." It is possible for that datum to remain as it is, -as a remnant of past feeling- still retaining its objective status as a nexus. The composition exists, regardless of whether it is ever performed.

But when it is performed, that datum serves as a lure for intensity in the present, likely to be prehended positively by virtue of its having proved of value in the past. The very regard in which a particular datum is held influences the prehension of it in the present. The witness of the centuries has its influence on the seriousness with which a composition is performed and received.

The quality that leads to such regard is the degree to which that subjective form approximates that of human feeling -in its broadest

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper & Row, 1929), p. 354, emphasis mine.

sense.<sup>2</sup> And the masterpieces are those which have not only done that, but in so doing display in a transparent manner the shape of creative advance. Free of intrusions of particularity (emotionalism, nationalism, etc.), the great composition sets forth in its purest form the image of flow and supercession. While composed at a certain point of time, that locus is minimized in importance by the congruence with the universe itself. It is the flux of la durée pure which dominates the subjective form of the perceiving occasion, not the limits of the intervals.

Once expressed in a composition, however, this central form, -this eternal object- never loses its embodied status. From composer's conception to articulation to performer's conception to articulation to listener's perception and contemplation, that shape of feeling is expressed somehow by spatio-temporal means. Art has not to do with free-floating insight. This is the reason for the presentational nature of art symbolism. The import is part and parcel of the symbol which conveys it, so that "the factor of significance is not logically discriminated, but is felt as a quality rather than recognized as a function."<sup>3</sup>

The physical society we identify as an art object, then, is not only "formally consistent with the embodied eternal objects" (above, p. 78), it is the only means by which that particular eternal object may be known. To change the symbol is to change the import and hence the

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<sup>2</sup>"Feeling in the broad sense . . . is whatever is felt in any way, as sensory stimulus or inward tension, pain, emotion, or intent." Susanne K. Langer, Mind (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), I, 4.

<sup>3</sup>Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 32.

shape of the eternal object's future influence. This derives directly from the fact that an essential part of that feeling is the way in which it has been felt in the past. This is an integral attribute of the symbol which conveys it, and, in theory, all of its influence on past subjective forms is presented in its contemporary influence. At any rate, the more general facts of its historic route are integral to the shape of that feeling itself. Whitehead's discussion of a feeling (in its technical sense) and its history will be helpful here;

A feeling can be genetically described in terms of its process of origination, with its negative prehensions whereby its many initial data become its complex objective datum. In this process the subjective form originates, and carries into the feeling its own history transformed into the way in which the feeling feels. The way in which the feeling feels expresses how the feeling came into being. It expresses the purpose which urged it forward, and the obstacles which it encountered, and the indeterminations which were dissolved by the originative decisions of the subject.<sup>4</sup>

This fact of process, expressed by Whitehead so clearly here, is the essential clue to the performer's responsibility. The inheritance of a feeling carries with it how it came into being and how it has been felt in the past. This is true by virtue of the Ontological Principle; nothing is felt that is not actual. An eternal object's embodied (objective) state is the reason for its efficacy, and the nature of that embodiment is highly important to the way in which it is felt -that is, the subjective form of its prehension. The performer's responsibility is so to present the tonal nexus that the embodied eternal object -the form of feeling- may be felt in such a way as to express how the feeling came into being. The "quality" of his performance is the degree to which his re-presentation for prehension actualizes the "feeling-tone"

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<sup>4</sup>Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. 354.

comprising that feeling. The way that feeling is felt must express the nature of that feeling.

In music performance, then, the musician discovers in a certain art symbol nexus the formal requirements for creative contrasts in the future. To some degree, confronted by the nexus, his subjective form of feeling is commensurate with the embodied eternal object. It is recognized as efficacious by virtue of the intensity of experience its prehension produces in the potential performer. That feeling is seen to be inextricably a virtue of the nexus, and from this insight comes the necessity to perform. Recognizing the universal essentiality of that embodied eternal object, the performer (in varying levels of intensity depending on background, personality, training, and so forth) feels that nexus with the subjective aim of necessity to share that form. Having discovered a way to better understand himself as a creature in time, the response of the artist is to make that insight available to others.

Then, once having conceptualized the importance of recreating an illusion which he has found to be of significance in his own serial past, the performer takes as many cues as possible from the spatial shape left him by the composer -perhaps a manuscript, printed music, graphs, or a recording. He tries to discover "what the composer wanted" or "meant," not to please the composer or to remain true to his memory, but to enable himself to assemble a tonal symbol that will, as far as possible, present that feeling form in a transparent manner. If he is able to present the embodied eternal object transparently enough as to allow the listener to entertain the corresponding possibility in its reverted form as a lure to his own concrescence, the performer has achieved his purpose.

What is the performer's responsibility in respect to the illusion which his "musicing" produces; -a "purely apparent flow of life existing only in time." Also, what may be said of the listeners' experience?

In re-presenting the composition's matrix for contemplation by his hearers, the performer does not necessarily impose that insight upon the subjective form of others. Whether the tonal symbol which he produces is felt ("intuited" according to Langer) as leading to intensity is ultimately beyond his control. We have seen that the locus of artistic import is in the supplemental phases of the prehending occasion, in this case, that of the listener. A single art symbol nexus, e.g. a performance of a violin concerto, may be felt aesthetically by one person, while prehended as simple vibratory physical feelings by the next. While the quality of the performance has some effect on its prehension (the way in which any past occasion achieved satisfaction is significant for the manner in which subsequent occasions prehend it), the matter of aesthetic perception lies outside the performer's control.

Though without immediate control over the reception of his music-making, the performer, through the shape of the perceptible symbol he presents, has a marked influence on the feeling-tone of the perceiver's actual world. The feeling's history, which is carried with that feeling, is prehended not as cold fact, but as the way it itself is felt. That "way" is the art symbol, and it is the performer's task to create a symbol that expresses, presentationally, the form of that feeling. His own subjective aim must be riveted to the matrix, so that no other consideration may intrude. The matrix does express the way the art work's central feeling is felt, and when the subjective aim of the

performer's actualization is toward anything but the making-again-present of that eternal object, the performance is diffuse. Considerations of time, comfort, nervousness, intonation, style, technique -so many feelings fight to wrest the performer's subjective aim out of the control of the commanding form. But when, through the discipline of channeling his purpose, he successfully re-presents that commanding form, he frees the concrescence of his listeners' occasions to enjoy the novelty induced by the hybrid prehension of that eternal object.

The performer's role, then, is one of transparency to the commanding form, so that his art's illusion may spring into being. When his musicing produces a tonal symbol whose attributes closely parallel the formal extensions of time, the perceptive listener finds himself valuing upward the possibilities of formal contrasts between the pure passage reverted from physical feeling of the tonal symbol and the inheritance of felt passage which derives from its serial past. This contrast and the novelty it produces is the illusion of virtual passage, and its emergence is a sign not only that the perception was musical, but that the performance was in fact a re-presentation of the commanding movement. When this happens, we may say that the performance, too, was a musical one.

In summary: Langer's "commanding form" has been seen to be a configuration of actualized possibilities which comprises the eternal object actualized in the art symbol. By virtue of the composer's skill, that eternal object is available as a "remnant of subjective form" for prehension as a lure for further feeling in the final integrative stages. The performer succeeds in his task to the extent to which he maintains the subjective aim of holding that eternal object up for his



listeners' prehension through the re-embodiment of those tendencies in tonal entities.

#### THE PERFORMANCE EVENT

The retention of novel contrasts by the listener's dominant occasion results in the positive prehension of a new temporal order -that of the matrix- and in the consequent experiencing of human feeling previously unavailable or at least not fully understood by him. The performance therefore broadens his understanding of himself as a creature in time, and he is a bit more human because of it.

How is one performance better than another? The performance of any music is prehended positively or negatively by virtue of its felt relevance to the percipient's concrescence. Insofar as that performance presents irresolvable conflicts with ingrained feelings of temporal order, it is prehended as a "poor" performance. On the other hand, the greater the congruence, the better the performance is judged to be.

Certain performances are more satisfactory than others for a single prehending society of occasions, given all of its particularity. Langer's theory, however, would minimize the importance of individual variations, relegating their effect to the realm of secondary illusion. Since the "creation of virtual time" is the aim of all music regardless of temporal or cultural origin, the degree to which a performance is prehended positively is most closely related to the degree of congruence it has with the percipient's feelings of experienced passage. These feelings, universal as they are, are the basis for the remarkably consistent judgment of history on works of art. Great music, given sufficient exposure in widely varied cultures and eras, finds universal

appreciation in respect to its articulation of fundamental human feeling.

Of course, a major part of the performance is the actualized matrix -the composition. Its congruence with human feeling plays a key role in the success of the performance. Poorly-conceived forms may be articulated in such a way that nearly all of the congruity suggested by the composer is actualized by the performer. It remains, however, a good performance of bad music. When great conceptions find poor articulation, the perceiver may yet transmute the underlying form and upgrade it in relevance while prehending negatively the disagreeable aspects of the tonal symbol. The conception remains great; nevertheless the performance event as a whole is a failure.

The rare meeting of great conception and great articulation is not so much the reaching of some ideal "hillock" top as it is the re-articulation of a congruent presentation expressing the shape of process in such a way that the tonal entities themselves are matched with that conception. They actualize the same eternal objects as does the composition, so that totality -the presentational symbol- presents one nexus for prehension, uncomplicated by the ingression of such things as insecurity or tonal variances. These perfect matches, which for a single composition may assume somewhat different forms from one era or locale to another, are "transparent" performances. The renditions of Mozart's Symphony No. 40 conducted by Bruno Walter and by Arturo Toscanini varied so much that they were readily distinguishable; yet both were transparent. In both cases, every tone, choice of tempo, point of emphasis and variation in dynamic serves the underlying form. The listener then perceives either confluence of composition and performance

as presenting nexus congruent with his sense of humanity.

A good deal has been said in the preceding pages of the deep significance for human self-understanding that the performance of music holds. The course of musical sounding has been shown to be formally congruent with a central existential reality -the "unfolding of life itself." The emergence of aesthetic perception has been shown to be the action of the perceiving occasion as immediate response to the novel contrasts between that "life unfolding" and virtual time. And the power of occurrent art over the perceiver's experienced passage coupled with the presentation of the temporal order of significant human feeling has been proposed as the key to music's power.

Woven throughout the paper has been the conviction that the reason we "make music" is to regain a sense of who we are. Just as our sense of our past selves is grounded largely on the pattern of feeling-tone comprising our memory, so the pattern of tonal symbols re-presents to us the feeling of passage as we have experienced it. We come away from the musical event with a renewed sense of the shape of our lives as they actualize possibility, undergo tension and release, and experience the rush of moments which are so precious, yet "never really are."

The performer's special role is to bring his technical talents to the task of tonalizing a particular matrix which has been presented to him in some form by the composer. His having composed it is the result of his awareness that that commanding form is congruent with some universal human feeling. When the performer's subjective aim is dominated by that matrix, the perceptible result of his activity presents to the listener a number of specialized possibilities for prehension. The listener who perceives aesthetically feels the novel configuration of

tonal and serial import for its own sake, and art symbol's insight into the nature of human feeling becomes a part of his own experience. He now knows more about himself both as an individual -his entire life of feeling is enriched- and as a creature in time. For now, the essence of actuality itself is a part of his awareness.

## Chapter 9

### SUMMARY ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper has been to present a statement of just what is happening in the event of musical performance. Of particular interest have been the function of the performer and the emergence of felt time's virtual image in that event.

Our awareness of time is based not on so-called "scientific" or "clock" time, but on our experience of "felt passage" or "experienced time." We do in fact experience time as relative to life's experience; time as relative to life's circumstances. This is the subjective expression of an objective truth; that is, the essence of existence itself is passage -process. This absolute is what Bergson called la durée pure -"the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances." Susanne Langer's Theory of Signs shows that Bergson's disavowal of symbolic expression is unnecessary. She respects the integrity of Bergson's insight while demonstrating the possibility of expressing form itself through presentational symbolism. Further, she argues, the forms of human feeling may be articulated using these non-discursive forms.

Music, according to Langer, is time made audible; its primary illusion is virtual passage. The set of tendencies and necessities composing a work's commanding form is that to which the composer has responded in his creative work. The resulting shape -the composition- is that of continuous advance, formally congruent with the "unfolding"

of life in time. It makes experienced passage audible. "Der Neugierige," one of Franz Schubert's finest songs, has been used as an example of how this is so. It is proposed, too, that we speak not of "playing music," but of "musicing," since the illusion of virtual time does not exist outside of that act. If it is not audible in the present moment, it is not music.

The basic tenets of Organic Philosophy are outlined, leading to a collation of the "duration" concept in Bergson and in Whitehead. The most important correspondence is seen to be between Bergson's "pure duration" and Whitehead's Ultimate Category of Creativity. This is the expression of creative advance through which the problem of multiplicity and unity is resolved. Creativity is neither force nor cause -it simply expresses how "the many become one and are increased by one."

The "aesthetic experience" describes the emergence of the upward valuation of novel contrasts resulting in non-conformal propositions. These data are dominated not by "what is" but "what might be." This is felt with the subjective form that this novelty has possibility for intensity by virtue of its being congruent with significant elements in the past (e.g. experienced passage). At the affirmation-negation contrast, these feelings are felt by the emerging conscious entity as virtual but efficacious. As satisfaction is achieved by the bringing of the new datum into contrast with the initial one, the former is felt as having the greatest influence on the occasion's being. The virtual is accepted as real; the virtual becomes actual.

The essence of musical form is seen to be in the relations among its elements -"intervalic" in both the tonal and the temporal senses. The ingredients of music correspond with one another in time

as do actual entities within the creative advance. Both exist only as expressions of process -they never really are, and therein lies their efficacy. Thus the musical contour parallels the shape of creation -it is "a parable of life itself." A work's commanding form is a configuration of actualized possibilities comprising the eternal object actualized in the composition. In music which serves for the most part its primary illusion -with a minimum of secondary considerations- that eternal object is formally congruent with creative advance. That eternal object is available as a "remnant of subjective form" for prehension as a lure for further feeling.

The performer's attention to the matrix opens up a new temporal experience for us, his hearers. The music symbol not only re-affirms the shape of our experienced passage; it presents for our contemplation the temporal shape of experiences we may not have undergone. This stretching of our feeling conceptuality deepens our humanity and our understanding of who we are. Musical performance contributes, event by event, to an enlargement of insight and enrichment of feeling-life that helps us understand just a little more of what it means to be human.

## Postscript

## A SHORT STORY

The composer had thought that nothing could rouse him from his fire on such a night, but nevertheless he found himself trudging through the winter rain, driven by the dread of an entire holiday without tobacco. The search had carried him far from his neighborhood, and it was with aching muscles that he finally came upon a dimly-lit smoke shop whose door was yet unlocked. The dark silhouette of rooftops against dull grey sky was completely foreign, and there was no longer a dry piece of cloth on him.

He always felt a certain peace of mind while walking alone on wet nights, and now, as he made his way homeward, he found that in spite of his discomfort he was glad to have been forced out of his comfortable rooms. Succumbing to a boyhood habit, he sought his reflection on the wet surfaces passing by. Strange contortions greeted him from puddle to puddle, and he lingered whenever he caught sight of his familiar shadow staring back from a marble slab or a soot-covered window, full of rivelets and bubbles.

At such a window, larger than most, he paused. Hundreds of tiny rivers atomized his image, which was illuminated from behind by a muffled yellow glow. The light mixed his features with those of a domestic parlor scene which looked at first glance like one of the mawkish little paintings he often saw on sale -rather cheap- in shop windows throughout his part of town.

But there was something about this picture which had caught his



attention. As his eyes became accustomed to the subtle lighting of the small inner room, his own dishevelled state was quickly forgotten as he sorted out from the street's reflection the shapes and lights belonging to the setting before him.

Eight or nine persons were a part of his delicate vision, all but two seated in gracefully-appointed chairs and settees. Just to the left of his mouth's image, a stocky, pleasant-looking woman had found her place at a keyboard and was hard at work, swaying with the pulse of her music. From time to time she smiled up from behind her pages at the others, whose faces were to be found in something of a circle, seemingly surrounding his head. The faces belonged to fortunate-looking people whose ages were mixed, and all of whom were obviously enjoying the company. They had assumed a wide variety of positions, not all of which appeared to be comfortable. One middle-aged gentleman seemed quite oblivious to the sharp edge of a straight-backed chair which dug at his back as he leaned upon it.

The object of the group's attention stood in the middle of a gaily decorated carpet, just to the right of his nose's bridge. She could not have been more than twenty-five years of age, but the composer's first impression of the young singer was one of striking maturity. Her dress, hair, and modest jewelry must have been beautiful, for they exactly fit the vision.

But it was not, in fact, to the girl herself that the gathered company had surrendered its full attention, but rather to the united efforts of what may well have been mother and daughter. And now, the audience included the composer. He was bound to the spot by the same force that drew him almost bodily into the circle.

His thoughts focused only on the emerging music, yet at the same time his brain filled with the most bewildering array of memories, plans and resolutions. Though these quiverings of the mind seemed almost fanciful, they belonged to the moment as do summer leaves on a branch, and a bouyant, new sense of order filled him, coming as if from the peculiar mixture of soft light and clear sound.

Song after song she sang, and all the while her listeners held their doll-like stances. Even from the outside of the window, it was not difficult for the composer to distinguish the tongue. Not much made sense, yet there was a unity of words and music that he sensed both through his ears and through the image of beauty and control that stood before him. The voice was pleasant -neither shrill nor too sweet- yet it was not the voice nor the sense of the words that held him motionless. He felt submerged in an overwhelming rush of feeling that scrambled after the kaleidoscope of images flying through his head, and he was surrounded by something warm. The simple charm of his cameo scene was utterly transcended. In the center of this moment -in his resignation to the young singer's art- he revelled in a vastness of experience that he had never known. His mind was numbed -yet alive with flashes of insight. His body ignored the drenching rain, yet every sense was thirsting for more to feel. Alive! For the first time he was alive! There was a joy in that thought -exhuberant joy. And the incredible sadness of a lifetime filled with lost moments could not overcome it.

Never had he felt so liberated from his body's bonds. He soared without effort or care, beyond the snatches of landladies and time. Larger than the universe itself, he drew the depths of creation to the

swelling bellows of his soul. The only answer, yes; the only enemy, regret; regret for an existence that rushes past the only reality that matters. There was so much to think about, but thought somehow . . .

There was rain in his boots. How long had it been there? Cold. Uncomfortable. Irritating. Sadly he grasped for the moment that had slipped away. She was still singing. More beautifully, he thought, than before. Where was that ecstatic good that had drawn himself apart, even while setting him alive?

With unaccustomed ferocity, he fixed his mind on the words. On the notes. The keys! The congregation stirred. His thought flashed to her eyes, her hands, his joy! -his hair! His damp, stringy hair was a curtain to his eyes. He had lost it. The harder he tried to find it again, the more he knew how far away it really was. He burned inside, knowing that he could neither hope to catch that moment again, nor do anything but try. No point trudging on through the now-quiet rain. Nothing urged him on. Nothing held him back.

It was a long night, and it had yet to end. His feet were still soaked and chill, his eyes glazed and silent. They ached from the strain of peering through dirty windows and dim-lit cobwebs. The weight had spread from his stomach through his entire body. The night-stand fell as he moved -for the first time since re-entering his rooms- away from his bed toward the window. The light shone in as the sun rose, invariably waking him. How he hated to wake up so early.

Shuffling back moments later to the overturned table, he found the note to his father which had fallen beneath his dusty instrument. A moment passed, before he tore the note to bits and let them fall.

Vienna, February 1971

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